

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—*Rigveda*, I-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI

N. CHANDRASEKHARA AIYER

34

INDIAN INHERITANCE

VOL. I

LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY

AND

RELIGION

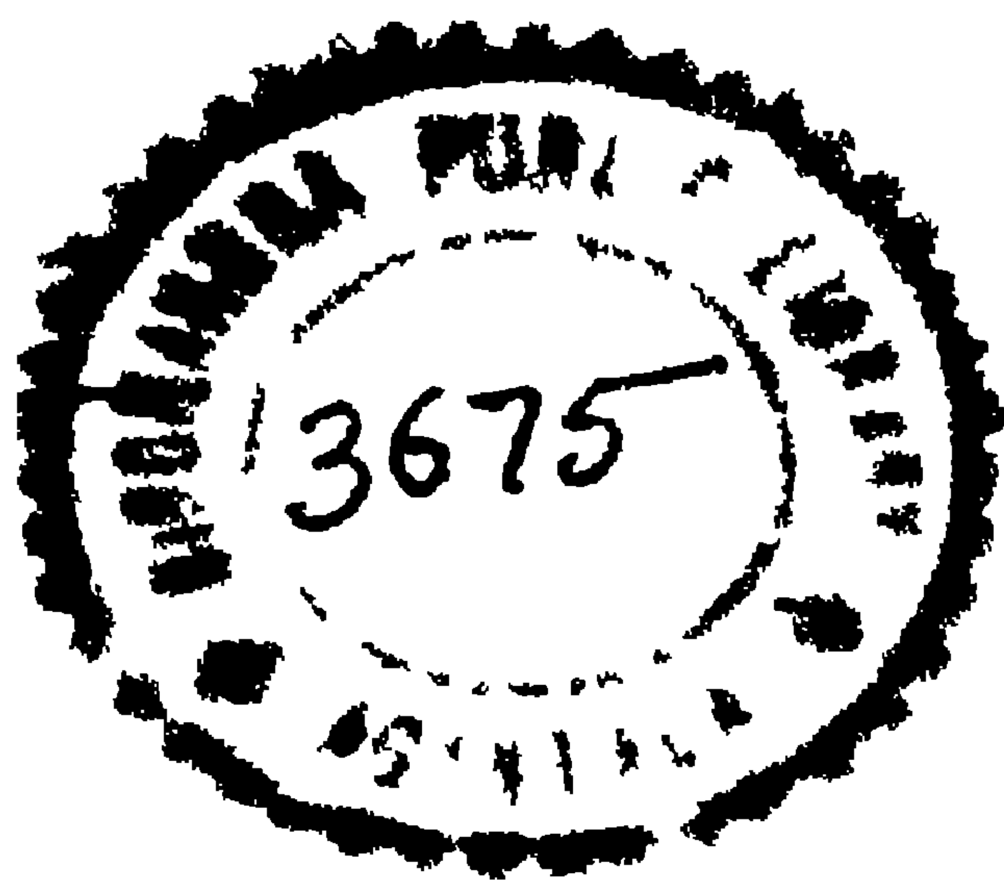


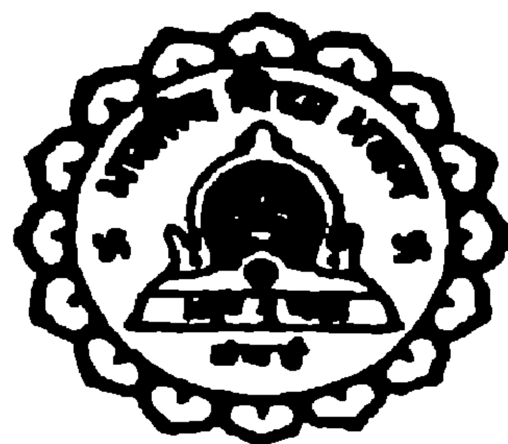
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1955

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 1-12-0

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may

become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it; the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life; a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax

is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI:
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

FOREWORD

I HAVE, on several occasions, noted the fact that the study of Indian history and culture is being neglected in our Universities. I equally consider it a part of the equipment of our educated men that not only should they be emotionally aware of the cultural heritage of our land, but should also develop a spiritual kinship with it.

Article 5 of the basic objective of the Bhavan runs as follows:—

"The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process."

The Vice-Chancellors' conference of U.P. Universities also made a recommendation that arrangements should be made in the Universities and the affiliated Colleges to start a regular course of lectures on Indian Culture. The principal difficulty in prescribing these courses was the lack of any book dealing with the different aspects on the Indian inheritance as viewed by leading modern writers, available at a price within the means of teacher or student.

The preparation and publication of such a book was a difficult task, which I am glad to say the Bhavan willingly agreed to undertake.

I am greatly indebted to my co-Editor of the Book University, Sri N. Chandrasekhara Aiyar, and to my

friends Sri Humayun Kabir, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Dr. K. M. Panikkar, Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee, Professor Abdul Majeed of the Jamia Millia, Dr. A. D. Pusalker, Asst. Director and Head of the Dept. of Ancient Indian History in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Dr. Asoke Majumdar, Professor of History in the Bhavan's College, for helping me in making the selections for such a book. Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee rendered continuous assistance in preparing the volumes. The burden of going through all the selected passages and editing them to fit into the plan of the book fell on Dr. Asoke Majumdar. Dr. A. D. Pusalker was also good enough to help in preparing the volume.

On behalf of the Bhavan, I gratefully acknowledge the debt it owes to the learned authors, among whom it has the honour to include such distinguished authors as Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Sri Rajagopalachari. Our acknowledgements are also due to several publishers who have given the Bhavan permission to include in this work extracts from books published by them.

The Bhavan is also indebted to the Ramakrishna Mission and Sri Aurobindo Ashram for their permission to publish extracts from the works of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo respectively.

I also acknowledge with thanks the help which has enabled the Bhavan, departing from the standard price of Re. 1/12/- for each of the Book University volumes, to place the first and only edition of this book on the market at the reduced price of Re. 1/4/- per each volume. We hope that this reduced price will bring the book within easy reach of the students of the Universities in India.

As this book had its orign in the need of the Universities of Uttar Pradesh, of which I happen to be Chancellor, the Bhavan has agreed to reserve 3,000 copies of both the volumes at the reduced price for teachers and students of these Universities.

Raj Bhavan,
Naini Tal.
July 1, 1955.

K. M. MUNSHI

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CONTENTS

"Why are not more gems from our great authors scattered over the country? Great books are not in everybody's reach; and though it is better to know them thoroughly than to know them only here and there, yet it is a good work to give a little to those who have neither time nor means to get more. Let every bookworm, when in any fragrant, scarce old tome he discovers a sentence, a story, an illustration, that does his heart good, hasten to give it."

—S. T. Coleridge.

SECTION I

LITERATURE

I

OUR INHERITANCE—SANSKRIT

THE study of Sanskrit is not a luxury and should not be looked upon as such. When we consider that the ideas, the literary forms and even themes of the literature of our great regional languages are predominantly derived from Sanskrit, that for proper use of a large percentage of words even in Dravidian languages, an understanding of Sanskrit is necessary, that the great classics of India, not only the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, but the masterpieces from which everyone in India draws his inspiration from the simple *Panchatantra* to *Shakuntala*, are in Sanskrit, and it is on their translations and their vulgarisations that our minds are fed and nourished from childhood, it will, I am sure, be conceded that a knowledge of Sanskrit, however imperfect, is a necessity and not a luxury. That it is so to the literary man, to the thinker and to the scholar would seem to be axiomatic. It may be asked why it should be so for the politician, for the man of affairs, for anyone who claims to be educated. The answer is that apart from Sanskrit being our greatest single national inheritance, the roots of our national behaviour, the pattern of our thought and the source of all our ideas being embedded in Sanskrit, a familiarity with it is necessary for anyone who claims to be a true Indian.

I do not say that a study of Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* or Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* is necessary for every one. Indeed I deprecate greatly the emphasis on grammar which

has been the ruin of Sanskrit studies. Many of you would remember the story of Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha* quoted in Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara,* how a new grammar, the *Katantra,* had to be composed in order to make the study of Sanskrit easy for the King. Whether true or not, it represents a very major issue even today. To equate knowledge of Sanskrit with *vyutpatti* or the creation or formation of words, from roots according to the rules laid down by Panini is to attach undue importance to linguistics, and to forget the substance for the form. Many of us write and speak freely in English, read the great literature of that language but how few of us know the *vyutpatti* of a single word, or are familiar with the works of the great English grammarians. A knowledge of the essentials of grammar is necessary to understand any language well, but the idea that seems to be exclusively prevalent in the world of Sanskrit scholarship that no one can be said to know Sanskrit unless he has mastered the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar seems to me exceptionally puerile. Indeed, if one is interested in popularising Sanskrit as a language of culture, the essential thing to do is to take it out of the hands of grammarians, and teach it as we teach other languages, by giving the student the necessary vocabulary and minimum grammatical apparatus to enable him to understand the classics. It is, of course, necessary for those whose aim is scholarship, or who desire to write in Sanskrit, or those who have to teach it, to study it in the hard way of mastering the intricacies of grammar. But to the layman who, let us say, desires to read the works of Kalidasa in original, or to understand Shankara's commentary on the *Gita* such a knowledge of grammar, I consider to be unimportant exactly in the same way as a knowledge of Skeat's Grammar is not necessary for a person desiring to read the plays

of Shakespeare, or to follow the metaphysics of Berkeley. This is a subject to which I would venture to invite your attention—the introduction of a course of what may be called Basic Sanskrit with a minimum, and where possible, regular grammatical rules and a vocabulary of commonly used words.

Sanskrit is the one common national inheritance of India. The South and the North, the West and the East have equally contributed to it. No part of India can claim it as its exclusive possession. When we talk of our national genius being unity in diversity, of the fundamental oneness of Indian mind, etc., what we really mean is the dominance of Sanskrit, which overrides the regional differences and linguistic peculiarities and achieves a true national character in our thought and emotions and even gives form and shape to the languages. So far as I know there has never been an instance in world history when a language which was but the speech of an invading few was able to establish its unchallenged authority over a whole sub-continent and be its permanently unifying factor for over two thousand years. Sanskrit is India's one national language and whatever position Hindi may achieve as *Vyavahara Bhasha* of the common languages of the future, the unity of India will collapse if it ceases to be related to Sanskrit or breaks away from the Sanskrit tradition. Sanskrit alone has that pre-eminence which Hindi could never claim, over the great regional languages, enabling her to maintain and uphold in every region of India the supreme claim of Indian unity. It may indeed be said that one who knows Sanskrit is a better Indian for he is in a position to appreciate what every part of India has contributed to it. With Vyasa he could roam about in the forests and pilgrimage centres of the whole country, with Valmiki he could visit Lanka, with Kalidasa see the

glories of Ujjain, walk in the Himalayan valleys, or follow the cloud from Ramagiri to Kailash, with Bhartrihari contemplate on the vanities of the world, with the merchants of Somadeva travel to Dvipantaras and even to Kanakapuri, with Shudraka live the life of a gay *nagarika:* Through Sanskrit we get something added to us from every part of India. Kalhana makes us live with the kings of Kashmir. With Jonaraja we share in the glory of Prithviraja. We take from Jayadeva some of his ecstasy, from Hemachandra Suri his gift of being able to illumine almost anything. With Queen Gangadevi of Vijayanagar we march on Madura. With Bhavabhuti we sport on the Godavari. With Dandin we are at the Pallava court at Kanchi. With Narayana Bhatta we are in Kerala. With Jagannatha Pandita we taste a little of the magnificence of Shah Jahan.

II

SANSKRIT LITERATURE

THE Sanskrit language took form in North-West India during the second millennium before our era. It is a detached branch of the linguistic group which has been given the name Indo-Iranian, which in its turn derives from the mother-language Indo-European. In a distinctly archaic form, rich in noun and verb structures which are yet ill co-ordinated, Sanskrit was first used for literary expression in the Veda.

The Vedas: The Veda or "knowledge" consists of a body of texts which though extending over many centuries (roughly from the 15th to the 6th century B.C.), relate to a single religious system, the religion called Vedic. The most ancient documents are the Samhitas (collections), which contain principally versified praises addressed to the chief deities of the cult, but also isolated formulae assigned for recitation in the course of the ceremonies, stanzas or groups of stanzas intended to be sung, incantations, and finally prose passages expounding ritual. They are divided into the *Rig-Veda* (Veda of hymns), *Yajur-Veda* (Veda of sacrificial formulae), and *Sama-Veda* (Veda of chants). To these three Vedas was later added the Atharva-Veda.

As opposed to this group of works, which constitute Shruti (Revelations) stands Smriti (Human tradition), which includes among other things the six Vedangas "additional members or limbs" of the Veda: phonetics (Shiksha), ritual (Kalpa), grammar (Vyakarana),

etymology (Nirukta), prosody (Chhandas), astronomy (Jyotisha).

Each of these texts is attached to one or other of the four Vedas; and within its Veda, to one of the schools, which increased in number as time went on, and became the guardians of particular interpretations of the sacred texts and of special liturgical practices. By reason of its antiquity, and of the richness of its mythology and ritual, all this literature is of incomparable value. At the literary level, some of the poems of the *Rig-Veda,* and of the *Atharva-Veda*, and some passages from the Brahmanas and the Upanishads, count among the finest that India has produced.

The Epics: The legendary stories (*itihasa*) to which the Vedic texts often refer, furnish some of the material from which the Epics were built up. About the beginning of our era, these took shape in two great works :

(a) The *Mahabharata* [The Great (story of the war of the) Bharata], a composite work, a huge poem of ninety thousand *shlokas* (couplets) and eighteen *parvas* (books), which traces the rivalry between the two families of the descendants of Bharata, the hundred Kauravas and their cousins the five Pandava brothers. a rivalry which issues in an implacable war and the death of almost all the leaders. The story is interrupted by numerous episodes (among the best known are those of Nala and Damayanti, and of Savitri), fables, moral tales, and long political and moral disquisitions, which make the *Mahabharata* the fundamental source of Hinduism and an encyclopaedia of Indian beliefs. It is also a work of art, which does not lack vigorous scenes and lively dialogues, set forth in a simple, rugged language which rises at times to grandeur. The famous *Bhagavad-Gita* (Song of the Blessed One), a short lyric-didactic poem, the gospel of the Krishna cult, is in-

serted into the *Mahabharata*. It is also extended by a supplement, the *Harivamsha* [The Line of Hari (Vishnu)] (4th century?), a collection of legends used by the Bhagavata sect.

(b) The second great epic, of more recent composition, is the *Ramayana* (The Deeds of Rama), a poem of twenty-four thousand *shlokas* and seven *kandas* (cantos) attributed to Valmiki. It is a version in literary form of an old theme of which traces are found in many parts of Asia. The main theme of the *Ramayana* is the story of Rama, Prince of Ayodhya, and his wife, the noble Sita; a story interwoven with folklore and historical material destined to be told and retold endlessly in the Indian literatures. A poem of the court, subject to definite conventions of form and thought, the *Ramayana* contains many passages of real delicacy of expression and sensibility.

The Puranas: Confined at first to the priest caste, the literature of Brahmanism widened its scope with the Puranas (Ancient matters), and later with the innumerable sectarian treatises of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism, which continued to multiply throughout the Middle Ages. In the older Puranas the sectarian imprint is absent or weak. They are collections of legends and myths arranged as a cosmogony, sometimes intermixed with historical deeds, often mingled with hymns, religious and magical formulae, and various kinds of instructions which made them minor encyclopaedias. The point of departure seems to have been local traditions concerning one or another pilgrim centre or holy place. The best known are the *Vishnupurana* [The Purana (revealed by) Vishnu] and the *Bhagavatapurana* (later) (The Purana of the Devotees of the Blessed One—Krishna).

The Tantras: Among the sectarian texts must be mentioned the Tantras, collections similar to the Puranas, but

devoted to more esoteric subjects; they frequently espouse the cult of the female Shakti (Power) which symbolises the Goddess *par excellence*, the wife of Shiva under one or another name.

The Dharma Shastras: The teaching on dharma, that is to say on the Hindu "norms", given in a diffuse way in the epics and the religious literature, was codified towards the end of the Vedic period. At first it was set forth in *sutra* (aphorism) form, and later in verse, which constitute the Dharmashastra (Teaching on dharma), or, as it is simply put, the Smriti (Tradition *par excellence*). The most famous is the Code of Manu or of the Manavas, known by the name of the Laws of Manu, which dates from about the beginning of our era An enormous literature has accumulated on this subject, which has been pursued by way of commentaries (really systems of jurisprudence) down to modern times. The ancient Dharmashastra includes, besides juridical doctrines (civil and criminal law), a great deal of matter concerning custom, much of which is essentially religious (such as a theory of expiation), and political (the rights of kings), and finally, didactic verses and miscellaneous discussions

Arthashastra and Kamashastra: Counterparts to the Dharmashastra are the Arthashastra (Teaching on profit) and the Kamashastra (Teaching on pleasure). But the number of works of these types is far smaller. Arthashastra is represented by one treatise of great importance, which tradition ascribes to Kautilya, that is, to the minister of Chandragupta Maurya, which places it in the 4th century before our era; but the attribution is very doubtful. It works over again, in an independent fashion, the subject-matter of dharma, but the essential object is to treat politics, economics and state administration for the purposes of a prince. The difficult text is a mine of new

information on the ancient society. Most of the other treatises are concerned more particularly with politics or Niti. As to Kamashastra, the best known representative of this "science" is the *Kamashastra* of Vatsyayana (5th century?), which in addition to erotics proper, treats of court life, the practices of the man of the world, and other questions connected with the principal subject. The later works are more or less specialised.

Alankara, Vyakarana and Natyashastra : Some other theoretical trainings have had more direct influence on letters. These are metrics and lexicography, which at an early period produced important works, and above all poetics (Alankarashastra) and grammar (Vyakarana). Poetics, which is separated from dramaturgy in order to elaborate it as an independent subject, covers all the rules which a poet needs to master if he is to work effectively, and in particular a highly elaborate theory of the figures of rhetoric. The treatises succeed one another from Bhamaha, Dandin and Vamana, that is to say, the 7th or 8th century, those of the Middle Ages sometimes assume enormous proportions, and others treat of special questions, like the curious *Kavyamimamsa* (Exegesis on poetry) of Rajashekhara (9th to 10th century). The foundations are laid on dramaturgy in the work attributed to Bharata, the *Natyashastra,* which may go back to the first centuries of our era, and condenses in close-knit verses all the conventions which applied to the theatre, the dance, mimicry, music, and dramatic chants. There are various manuals on dancing, music, architecture and many other arts, down to cookery and theft.

As for grammar, the earliest enquiries, relating to phonetics, date from Vedic times. The Bible of the subject remains the treatise in eight chapters (*Ashtadhyayi*) which we owe to Panini, which certainly dates from as

far back as the 4th century B.C. It sets forth in very concise *Sutras*, aphorisms, the structure of the Sanskrit language as it existed at the close of the Vedic age, simplified and standardised "classical Sanskrit", as it was called henceforth. The work of Panini, which is the subject of a long series of commentaries [we must mention at least the extraordinary *Mahabhashya* (Great Commentary) of Patanjali, 1st or 2nd century B.C.], is without doubt one of the most characteristic products of the Indian genius.

Hindu Sciences : In the scientific subjects a number of important works appeared. In astronomy—often without much distinction from astrology—the treatises of Varahamihira (6th century), in mathematics—worked out in relation to astronomy—the treatises of Aryabhata (5th century), of Brahmagupta (7th century), and of Bhaskaracharya (12th century). In medicine the compendia attributed to Charaka and Sushruta, which were prepared or written at a very early period.

Historical Records : If there are hardly any historical works, many texts contain in a more or less romanticised form some of the elements of annals, of connected narrative: the most authentic is the *Rajotarangini* (The River of Kings) of Kalhana (12th century), a brilliant chronicle of the dynasties of Kashmir. The principal source remains the immense volume of Sanskrit epigraphy, with panegyrics of kings often of considerable size, records of donations to Brahmanas, and to communities, edicts and decrees.

Many works treat of diverse subjects, like the curious *Brihatsamhita* (Great Collection) of Varahamihara (6th century) or the *Chaturvargachintamani* [The Ideal Jewel of the Four Objects (of human activity)] of Hemadri (13th century).

Philosophy : In none of these subjects is the literature so extensive as in philosophy. The most ancient specula-

tions go back as far as the Vedic hymns. They took a more deliberate form in the Upanishads, which are at the same time the outcome of the Veda and the door of access to the classical Vedanta. This Vedanta or "End of the Veda" was formulated, in the early centuries of our era, in a collection of somewhat obscure aphorisms attributed to Badarayana. Their oral interpretation culminated, in the 9th century, in the vast commentary of Shankara, who took the doctrine to an extreme point. The authors who came later, Ramanuja (11th century), Nimbarka (13th ?), Madhvacharya (13th), Vallabhacharya (16th) and others, conducted the exegesis of the *Vedantasutra* in various ways. Several schools separated themselves, each reinterpreting in its own way all the ancient texts, including the *Gita,* which seem to them applicable to Vedantic purposes. This was the most prolific literature of the Middle Ages.

Although it continues the essential idea of some of the Upanishads, the Vedanta is less orthodox than the Mimamsa (Exegesis *par excellence*), of which the "aphorisms" (*Sutras*), compiled by Jaimini (3rd century?), and often commented on later, give rules of interpretation on ritual and Dharma. Two great schools formed, that of Prabhakara (end of the 7th century), and that of Kumarila in the 8th.

The Samkhya (Exposition in number) makes a greater departure from orthodoxy, though it also claims to revive a certain Vedic tradition. The basic text is the collection of mnemonic verses of Ishvarakrishna (before the 6th century). Its principal ideas have passed into the common fund of Hinduism almost as much as those of the Vedanta. And it is the Samkhya which has served as the philosophical framework of Yoga, which left to itself only describes the procedure necessary for certain supra-normal realisations. Thus "philosophical" Yoga, which received

its formulation in the *Yogasutra* of Patanjali (5th century?), is distinguished from practical Yoga, whose origins go very far back, though it was given literary expression at a comparatively recent period.

The Nyaya (Logic), of which the "aphorisms" (*Sutras*), attributed to Gautama, are perhaps as early as the first centuries of our era, is an essentially "profane" discipline. It is elaborated in numerous works from the beginning of the 5th century, first commentaries on the Sutras, then independent texts, partly of Buddhist or Jain inspiration. Sometimes they deal with logic in the strict sense, sometimes with general epistemology, and sometimes they combine with elements of the Vaisheshika The Vaisheshika (Discriminative Exposition) also possesses its own texts, which claim to derive from the Sutras of Kanada, whose date is still uncertain.

There are other regions of speculation which could be mentioned, in particular grammar, upon which Bhartrihari (7th century) constructed a "philosophy" of linguistic categories which is not without interest. But the "six points of view" (*darshana*) of which we have just spoken, form one whole, grow on parallel lines, and seem to cooperate to lay the definitive basis of a single doctrine of salvation. As with other technical literature in Sanskrit, these works predominantly claim to be commentaries, which are essentially concerned to draw from a basic text, generally an equivocal one, a series of ever more subtle—and divergent—implications.

Classical Literature : Composition of an artistic type was in no way smothered under this mass of didactic literature. A number of the scenes in the epics, not to mention the Vedas or the Puranas, were already conceived with an eye to artistic effect, without always conforming strictly to the standards of the classic poetics. The principles of poetics

prevail in the greater part of the literature which remains to be dealt with : lyrical poetry, drama and stories. Only tales and fables to a large extent eluded it.

Lyric Poetry : Everything points to the existence of an ancient lyric poetry, of which fragments survive here and there. But the first fully formed work is that of Kalidasa, the greatest name of literary India. It is generally believed, in agreement with tradition, that he was a contemporary of Vikramaditya, that is Chandragupta II (4th to 5th century). The *Meghaduta* (Cloud Messenger) is a touching love poem, set in an ingenious framework. The attribution of the *Ritusamhara* (The Round of the Seasons) to Kalidasa is still doubtful. Among later works the palm undoubtedly goes to the Hundred miniatures on romantic themes. A number of other collections could be mentioned: we must reserve a separate place for the religious lyrics, of which the best specimen is the *Gita-Govinda* (The Cowherd—Krishna—in Song) of Jayadeva (12th century), who refined the themes of popular song.

The lyric with a sententious tendency is represented by Bhartrihari (7th century), whose three "Centuries" on Love, on Practical Wisdom and on Renunciation have many fine passages of emotion or spirituality. There are many works in this mixed style, some individual, more often collective. We should mention the existence of anthologies, of which several are ancient and rich. In a sense there is hardly a literary work, epic or narrative, which does not contain many stanzas which are at once didactic and more or less "emotive", their densely packed structure is one of the achievements of Sanskrit poetry, otherwise so excessively devoted to formal perfection.

This sententious poetry is even more attractive when it is put to the use of a historical or pseudo-historical tale: or of a didactic work like the *Kuttanimata* (The discourse

of the Go-between) of Damodara Gupta; or lastly, in a quite different spirit, like the Shaivaite poems attributed (wrongly) to Shankara. The minor epics, the Mahakavyas (Great Poems) are equally of a mixed character; these works, first written in earlier times, attained perfection only with Kalidasa, in the *Raghuvamsha* (The Line of Raghu) and the *Kumarasambhava* (The Birth of Kumara —son of Shiva). The ordering of phrase and the use of vocabulary, the effects of euphony and rhythm, are all appropriate ; in spite of the conventional moral, a subtle art gives the poems a certain air of simplicity and probability.

After Kalidasa, the well esteemed poems of Bharavi, the *Kiratarjuniya* [The Combat of Arjuna and (Shiva disguised as a) Kirata (5th century?)] and of Magha, the *Shishupalavadha* (The Killing of Shishupala) (7th century)) began to carry rhetorical devices to excess. It is indeed a common feature of most types of Sanskrit literature, that authors compete with one another in piling up "difficulties" just in proportion as the level of their work declines A poem of this type, like the *Bhattikavya* (6th century), gives a free rendering of the story of Rama, and at the same time methodically illustrates the rules of grammar and of prosody.

Drama : The facts are similar as regards the theatre. After the first simple works, the refined comedies attributed to Bhasa (3rd century ?), which draw freely on ancient legends, and of which the best is the *Svapnavasavadatta* (The Dream-Vasavadatta) ; and after the *Mrichchhakatika* (The Clay Cart) of Shudraka (4th century), the liveliest comedy of manners which Ancient India has left us, in which a political theme is happily joined to a love story, the pieces properly regarded as classical show an elaborate art; the *Mudrarakshasa* (The Rakshasa and the Seal) of Vishakhadatta (6th century?), whose ground-plot is a story

of political intrigue; and the long series of romantic comedies which begin with the *Shakuntala* (name of the heroine) of Kalidasa, are adorned with all the graces of sensibility and of style. The same author's *Vikramorvashiya* [Urvashi (won by the) Valour (of Pururavas)] is a lyrical drama, and the *Malavikagnimitra* (names of the characters) is the type of the comedy of the harem Harsha, the king (7th century), is declared to be the author of three pieces: two comedies of the harem, *Ratnavali* and *Priyadarshika* (names of the heroines), and also *Nagananda* (The Bliss of the Nagas), a dramatic rendering of a Buddhist legend. But the greatest name, with Kalidasa, is that of Bhavabhuti (8th century) who in his heroic tragedies *Mahavirachanita* [Story of the Great Hero (Rama)] and *Uttararamacharita* (The End of the Story of Rama), as also in his comedy *Malatimadhava* (names of the characters), uses with very great ability the resources of the language and of psychology. With Rajashekhara (9th century), Murari (11th century) and others, the drama continues without signs of new life; an interesting allegorical drama is the *Prabodhachandrodaya* (The Rise of the Moon of Knowledge) of Krishnamishra (11th century) There are finally, some tolerably good farces and satires.

These works are distinguished, first, by a mixture of dialogue (written in more or less familiar prose) and verse often descriptive, and having no connection with the plot, written in a learned style They are distinguished, secondly, by the allotment to each character of a language suitable to him: men of high rank speak Sanskrit, those of low rank or culture, as well as the women, speak Prakrit; the parts which are sung are in a special dialect; and at least theoretically there is quite a gamut of dialects.

Stories, Tales and Fables : Narrative works in prose are of very various types. There is first a small number of

romantic tales, like the *Dashakumaracharita* (Story of Ten Young Men) of Dandin (7th century?), a series of picturesque adventures, or the *Kadambari* (name of the heroine) of Bana, (7th century), in which he uses all the elaborate refinement of the poetical works. To these may be added an historical story, the *Harshacharita* [History of (King) Harsha], by the same Bana, written in the same style.

There are, in the second place, the episodic stories, composed in a relatively simple verse form: they derive from an original which is lost, the Prakrit *Brihatkatha* (The Great Story) of Gunadhya (3rd century?). The best-known version is the *Kathasaritsagara* (Ocean of the Rivers of Stories) of Somadeva (11th century), an inexhaustible source of folklore themes

There are finally the stories in simple prose interspersed with sententious verses, which through the entertainment of the fable try to convey instruction and illustrate the principle of worldly wisdom. The *Panchatantra* (Collection of Five Books) of unknown date and authorship, has come down to us in several different editions. This work has travelled outside India to an extent without parallel : more than two hundred versions, in more than fifty languages, have been identified A popular abridged version is the *Hitopadesha* (Profitable Instruction).

Buddhist and Jain Literature · It must also be remembered that a vast literature has grown up, since the early days of Buddhism and Jainism in the service of these religions. Often incorrect in form, using many vernacular words, it deals with religious practices, sermons, legends and scholastic questions. It rarely rises to the level of art, although one of the Buddhist doctors, Ashvaghosha (2nd century) wrote some edifying plays and made attempts at Mahakavya Among those who expounded Buddhist dogma,

we must mention several teachers of the Mahayana School, Nagarjuna and Aryadeva (of undecided dates), Asanga and Vasubandhu (4th to 5th century), and finally the "logicians" Dignaga (5th century) and Dharmakirti (6th to 7th century), and the didactic poet Shantideva (7th century). A famous work is the *Saddharmapundarika* (The Lotus of the Good Law) (date undetermined).

Thus we see that few departments of culture lack representation in this literature. Of the highest value for the learned, it is liable to disconcert and even perhaps irritate one who comes to it without preparation. It is largely esoteric, in the sense that convention and system play a considerable part in it, and that language tends to assume symbolic values, and this is accentuated by the "abstract" grammar of post-Vedic times, with its nominal style and long compounds. Except in some happy descriptive passages, the reader is not often in the presence of an immediate, tangible reality. That is the fate of any literature torn away from contact with the living language (Sanskrit was practically a "dead" language, apparently, from the beginning of our era) and confined to an elite (the priest, the pandit, and the court poet) who use it without renewing it.

Pali : Ancient India possessed from an early period certain dialects derived from Sanskrit, which make up what is called the Indian medium. Even these hardly ever appear in a really popular from, and some texts give the impression of having been translated from a Sanskrit original. The most important of these languages, and the most ancient, is Pali, which served as the vehicle for Buddhism. It appears first in the form of the Buddhist canon, in its traditional three-fold division into rules of discipline (*Vinaya*) dialogues and sermons (*Sutta*), and dogmatic works (*Abhidhamma*) : and later in the post-canonical works, which in-

clude a great number of commentaries—one may note the *Visuddhimagga* (The Way of Purity) by Buddhaghosha (5th century?); historical chronicles, like the *Mahavamsha* (The Great Line) (6th century); and collections of stories, of which the most important by far is the *Jataka* [The book of the Previous Births (of the Buddha)], a vast body of five hundred edifying legends, of which the verses, inserted as introductions or in the prose text, are accepted as part of the canon. A work of uncommon type is the *Milindapanha* (The Questions of Milinda) (end of the 2nd century), a dialogue between the Greek king Menander and the saint Nagasena. There are finally some collections of legends written in a strongly Sanskritised vernacular, the *Mahavastu* (The Collection of Great Subjects), and the *Lalitavistara* [The Expansion of the Play (of the Buddha)], (date undetermined).

Prakrits : The Prakrits are a group of dialects belonging, in principle, to different areas, which we find used for fairly definite literary purposes. The most important were used for the canonical and extra-canonical texts of the Jainas: they were succeeded by the Apabhramsha, a "degraded" Jain Prakrit in use undoubtedly before the 10th century. Other Prakrits are used, as noted above, in the classical drama. There were also some independent texts : like the *Sattasai* [The Seven Hundred (Stanzas)] attributed to the king Hala (2nd century), a collection of lyrics, often very fine, of rural life, popular in inspiration but strongly stylised. The *Gaudavaha* [The Murder of (Prince) Gauda] by Vakpatiraja (8th century) is a specimen of the learned poem on a historical subject.

III

VEDAS

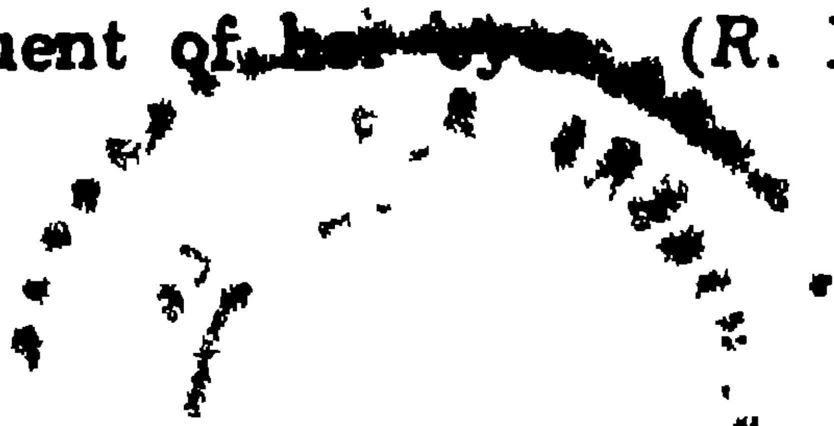
THE Vedas are four in number—the *Rig-Veda*, consisting of 10,552 *mantras*, the *Sama-Veda* of 1875, the *Yajur-Veda* (the Vajasaneyi Samhita text), of 2,086 (some of the *mantras* being in prose) and the *Atharva-Veda* of 5,987 (a few of them in prose). In all, the Vedic Samhitas (collection of the texts as distinguished from the literature based on the Vedas—Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads etc.) consist of 20,500 *mantras*. These, however, include repetitions, specially of a number of Rig-Vedic verses in the other Vedas.

The first thing to note about the Vedas is that they are in the form of poetry, except for some prose passages, which again, are what is called rhythmic prose. The Vedas contain the earliest recorded poetry and prose literature of the human race.

The religion and culture of the Hindus are rooted in the Vedas which no specialist, either eastern or western, has placed much later than 1500 B.C. Some have placed them very much earlier.

It is usual to describe Vedic poetry as primitive. If, by "primitive poetry" is meant tribal song or folk ballad, then nothing could be farther from the fact. No primitive poet ever sang:

> Thought was the pillow of her coach,
> sight was the unguent of her eyes. (R. X. 85.7)



If we should call Vedic poetry primitive, we should do so with reference to its pristine purity and its freedom from the *malaise* of the later civilization. (Our people have got a better name for the Vedic age—Krita or Satya Yuga). It takes life in its fullness, no maladjustment being caused by the loss of balance between the primary biological instincts (search for food, fighting for safety, conjugal love), or between the active and contemplative faculties of the mind (a perfect harmony between *brahma,* spiritual power, and *kshatra,* political power, being sought) or between matter and spirit. We do not find in the Vedas any evidence of the tragedy of the divided soul, and the anguish and misery that accompany it, nor even the oppressive sense of cosmic tragedy with the profound melancholy induced by it (as we find among the Greeks). Nor do we come across signs of repression or self-torture accompanied by morbid sin-consciousness, sometimes found to be acutely felt among followers of the Hebraic religions. No negative attitude induced by disillusionment or frustration, as found in Buddhistic and post-Buddhistic sects in India itself, no world-weariness, is in evidence in the Veda.

Vedic sages are positive in their acceptance of life and death and life's struggles and imperfections ; positive, too, in their acceptance of the ultimate values—of truth, goodness, beauty— and of Eternal Law (*Rita*) and the Ultimate Reality. They are intensely religious, in the sense of feeling the living Presence of the Divine in the beauty and glory of the universe (*Vibhuti yoga*), of finding in their souls the strong urge of love and giving an adequate expression to it in terms of song. Vedic poetry came out of a joyous and radiant spirit, overflowing with love of life and energy for action, and looking up with serene faith to the Divinity for support and inspiration. Because the Vedic sages loved life as well a[illegible]ery wish of theirs for the good

things of the earth took the form of an ardent prayer. And the prayer often took the form of song which tried to reach "the supreme Lover of song". The sages, including women among them, placed themselves under the discipline of *Satya* (Truth) and *Rita* (Eternal Order) as well as of *Tapah* (spiritual ardour, superseding animal life). They were pure (*shuchi*) in their mental make-up, dedicated to a pure way of life (*shuchi-vrata*) and were transported by spiritual exaltation and what they accepted as divine inspiration. Their word (*Vak*) was, for them, a revelation in their souls of the inner truth of reality, which they creatively received.

In their purity, austerity and power, the Vedic hymns have appeared to me like fresh, clear streams gushing out of a rocky mountain. But this analogy of mine has been anticipated by the Vedic sage himself:

> Like joyous streams bursting from the mountain
> Our songs have sounded to Brihaspati (*R* X 68.1)

The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the Vedas are extremely rich in poetic value. Perhaps nowhere else in the world has the glory of dawn and sunrise and the silence and sweetness of nature, received such rich and at the same time such pure expression. The beauty of woman has been most tenderly delineated. It has been said by Anatole France that the smile on the woman's face marked a new step in human evolution. The Vedas speak of "gracious, smiling women" and in Ushas, with the beauty of the youthful woman, they find the perfect smile. They regard the love of man and wife and the motherhood of woman with a profound sense of sanctity. Life's little things are invested with holiness and living appears to be a grand ritual.

If great poetry is the combination of what have been called "the emphasis of sound" and "the emphasis of



sense," if it unites imagery and melody into a complete whole, then there is no truer or greater poetry than we find in the finest of the Vedic verses. In English literature only the noblest passages in Shakespeare and Milton, for example, can be cited as a parallel to the best of the Vedic hymns, in respect of the spontaneity of expression, the power and sweep of rhythm and the subtlety and solemnity of effect. If sublimity is the echo of a great soul, certainly the Vedic poet had a greater soul than is found lodging in the primitive man.

It is surprising to find that the Vedic sages were quite confident about the future of their poetry. Two personified Rivers, addressing a sage-poet, say:

> **Forget not, Singer! this word of thine,**
> **which after-ages will resound (*R* III 33 8)**

The words of the Vedas have been resounded through at least three and a half millenniums, and we should expect them to be resounded for many more.

Vedic theism presupposes the existence of *Dharman* (an older form of the term), meaning, the eternal Law. For example it is said of Vishnu that "He upholds the eternal statutes (*Dharmani*)" Agni has been described as the "President of Eternal Laws" The *Atharva-Veda* speaks of the earth as "upheld by *Dharman*—eternal Law".

The *Mahabharata*, wanting to give the root-meaning of the word Dharma, says:

> **Because it upholds, it is called Dharma; Dharma upholds the creation. (Karnaparva, 69 59)**

Buddha popularised the term in its Pali form, Dhamma, signifying eternal moral principles, unconnected with, and independent of, one's faith in the Divinity.

Thus Dharma stands for the fundamentals of religion, the ideal form of conduct that was accepted as the founda-



tion of right living by all religious orders in ancient India, whether theistic, atheistic, or agnostic. It would be interesting to find a comprehensive definition of Dharma in early religious literature—of the basic principles that are believed to uphold society.

Such a definition of the contents of Dharma—of what upholds the earth—is found in the *Atharva-Veda* (though the word Dharma has not been used in the passage).

> Truth, Eternal Order that is great and stern, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual—these uphold the earth (*Ath* XII. 1.1).

These six, then, according to the Vedic ideal are the fundamentals of religion Let us consider them.

It is important to note that the Veda places truth first and ritual last in religion. This is not without its special significance, for in every age in the history of the Vedic religion ungrudging supremacy has been conceded to truth, and there is nothing in this religion like articles of faith. In every age the problem has been to find out *truth* and not to stick to *belief*

In the Vedas truth has been described as the essence of divinity. (*Savita satyadharma*) : The Deity has truth as the law of His being, says the *Atharva-Veda*. The *Rig-Veda* calls the Deities manifestations of truth :

> The three and thirty Deities the manifestations of Truth, saw You Two (Asvins) approach Truth. (*Rg.* VIII. 57.2)

Elsewhere in the *Rig-Veda* the Deity has been described as truth. Ultimately, in religion, as understood in ancient India, it is not so much a question of theism and atheism as it is one of truth and untruth.

Prayer and ritual of the type come out of a truthful life and true heart. The libation of Soma flows—"speaking truth, truthful in action". The path of religious progress is the path of truth.

The Atman, he says, is to be realised through truth. And with supreme confidence he declares:

> Truth alone triumphs and not untruth. (*Mundaka Up.* III. 1.6).

Hence the Upanishadic prayer. "Lead me from unreality (*asat*) to reality (*sat*)".

"By truth is the earth upheld", says the *Rig-Veda.*

The first essential of Dharma, then, is Truth. The second is *Rita*, Eternal Order, Eternal Law. The word is obsolete in modern times, but its negative *anrita*, meaning literally, disorder or chaos, has been used from ancient times as the negative of truth.

Rita, in its moral aspects, however, is wider than truth, it includes justice and goodness, and is almost synonymous with Dharma as an ethical concept So *Rita* is opposed to evil, and the opposition is severe; therefore it is spoken of as "stern and fierce" (*ugram*)

As on the moral plane *Rita* leads to the triumph of good over evil, so on the cosmic plane it leads to triumph of light over darkness.

Rita that reduces chaos to cosmos, and gives order and integration to matter also gives it symmetry and harmony. Hence the conception of *Rita* has an aesthetic content too, it implies splendour and beauty. For example, when in obedience to Law the rains break, the "fountains" that "bubbling, stream forward" are "young virgins skilled in Law". Nature becomes beautiful through conformity to Law The lovely Dawn (Ushas) "true to Eternal Order," is "sublime by Law", "the youthful Maiden breaks not the laws of Eternal Order by coming day to day to her tryst"

It is for this reason that the Vedic Gods, upholding *Rita,* are all lawful, and beautiful and good. Their beauty is a significant attribute. Terms implying beauty

like *Shri* (beauty, splendour), *Bhargas* (glory), *Vapus* (beautiful form), *Vama* (lovely), *Charu* (beautiful), *Chitra* (wonderful) are frequently used for the Deities.

The aesthetic approach to reality illustrates the highest refinement of the mind and the finest culture The beauty of Ushas is the beauty of the maiden, the beauty of Sarasvati is that of the mother And not only has the woman's loveliness been enshrined in the portraiture of the Goddess, but it has also been evoked through simile or metaphor to illustrate divine attributes. There are fin vignettes of mother and child in the references to "the mother bending to feed her child", of "the mother kissing her child and the child returning the kiss", of "babes in arms rep sing on then mother", of "playful children, whose mothers are handsome"

By revealing the beauty that lies at the core of the cosmic order, the Vedic sages uplifted the mind of man to unimaginable heights In a succession of verses, Savita is implored to "send far away all evil," and "send what is good " then he is asked to grant "all things that are beautiful," and then he is spoken of as one "whose power is in truth". Thus the Deity is understood in terms of goodness, beauty and truth - the three ultimate values Ushas, the beautiful One, "obedient to the reins of Order (*Rita*)," is implored to send "thoughts that are more and more blissful". Thus beauty, an aspect of *Rita* as cosmic law, is, so to speak, only the obverse of *Rita* as moral law. So form as beauty (*Rupa*) and form as morality (*Dharma*) are harmonised by the contemplation of a universal (*Brihat*) order (*Rita*).

The term *Rita* has also been applied to the Vedic ritual. It has been observed that *Rita* is *rite* as well as *right*. As a ritual *Rita* signifies the orderly performance

of the ceremonial part of the worship which is a complicated form of acting, and therefore possesses the attributes of art.

It is interesting to note that while *Rita* as cosmic and moral law is understood to be immutable and eternal, *Rita* as ritual is expected to vary with time and to be renewed to suit the human desire for change: "let the new ritual grow".

In the Vedas every God or Goddess is spoken of as the protector of *Rita*, the cosmic order. More particularly certain Deities are described as Kings who are guardians of *Rita*, and as Kshatriyas—protectors and rulers. Mitra and Varuna have been spoken of as such.

The emissaries of Varuna, "upholders of Eternal Law," "survey both the worlds," and "inspire the praise-songs of noble-minded poets". The sinner is caught in the noose of Varuna.

The earthly king makes Mitra and Varuna his models. Like them he wants to be an upholder of order (*Rita*) as applied to social life; he, therefore, calls himself a Kshatriya.

The Kshatriya is not only a protector, but, being a defender, is also a fighter. The Deity who represents the ideal of the fighter as well as the giver of law, is typically Indra. In Him the spirit of Kshatra finds its widest application.

There is a stirring call to the people to be heroic after the manner of Indra.

The earthly king becomes a Kshatriya, protector, by applying his Kshatra, ruling power, to society, as the Divine Kings apply their ruling power to the universe in accordance with *Rita*.

The ideal of society is to translate the order (*Rita*) of the cosmos into social order. Like the Greek conception

of Fate, *Rita* does not derive its power from the will of the gods, but lies above divinity. With the detailed acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth, every soul was believed to be born with the residue of Karma of previous births which, remaining unseen, guided man's present life to happiness or misery according to Eternal Justice. The existence of evil is recognized, but it is believed that evil can be fought and fought successfully, within us and without us. Indra's destruction of Vritra, the power of darkness and evil, which is opposed to *Rita*, is indicative of the final triumph of goodness and law over evil and disorder. Every man has his own Vritra to fight: he can fight successfully only if he is valiant enough Thus the Vedic outlook is the heroic or epic outlook on life. Life is hard and there is evil in our midst: but victory is ours if only we are brave, and follow goodness resolutely

Satya in the metaphysical as well as the moral sense, and *Rita* in its broad sense, covering the cosmic, ethical, aesthetic, and social law, as well as the ritual, represent the higher interests of life. Satya stands for the religious-philosophical interest, and *Rita*, in its typical sense, for the moral-political interest The *Rig-Veda* speaks of the threefold interests of life.

Three types of men emerge—the Brahmana, the philosophic man; the Kshatriya, the political man; and the Vaishya, the common man. While the last will produce the wealth of the nation, the second will work for order and security and the first will carry on the intellectual and spiritual enterprise. But while the last group needs protection, special effort is to be directed to the encouragement of the first two groups of society.

Thus Brahman and Kshatra would be found to make up between them the religious and political idealism of Vedic times.

Two types of virtues are stressed in the Vedas: wisdom and valour, corresponding to Brahman and Kshatra. There are prayers, on the one hand, for intellectual power (*dhi*), wisdom (*kratu*), efficiency (*daksha*), spiritual vigour (*varchas*), higher talent (*medha*) etc.

On the other hand, there are prayers for strength (*savas*), valour (*virya*), manliness (*nrimna*), spiritual power (*ojas*), conquering power (*sahas*), wrath (*manyu*), fearlessness (*abhaya*), vigour (*bala*) and other qualities of heroism.

Social organization would be perfect when the two powers, Brahman and Kshatra, would work in harmony.

The four remaining principles of Dharma, consecration, austerity, prayer and ritual, come generally under the category of Brahman, the philosophical-religious interest. The first two of these, consecration and austerity, are chiefly directed at the realization of Satya, or Ultimate Truth These refer to detailed systems of self-culture for spiritual advancement.

Consecration is not merely a formal initiation. There is a deep personal contact between the teacher (Acharya) and the pupil under instruction (Shishya). While giving the initiation, the Acharya, so says the *Atharva-Veda,* carries the pupil within him, so to speak, as the mother carries the foetus in her womb and after the three days of the Vrata, the pupil is born, a wonder whom the Gods in a body come to see. This initiation, therefore, is the path of transition from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity, from untruth to truth.

The path to higher life is the path of constant and hard striving. One wins intellectual and spiritual enlightenment through the sweat of one's brow. What applies to the performance of the ritual also applies generally to spiritual life:

Gods befriend none except those who have been tried.
(R. IV. 33, 11.).

The Tapas *par excellence* at the beginning of life is the discipline for the student of Vedic learning (Brahman) known as Brahmacharya—the way of obtaining Vedic knowledge primarily, and the way of education and culture in a general sense. The *Atharva-Veda* describes the character of the Brahmachari in detail. "He satisfies the Acharya by Tapas." "The Brahmachari with his sacred wood (*samidh*), sacred belt (*mekhala*) and his labour, satisfies the world." "He stands high, clad in spiritual light, with his Tapas." The young boy takes up the intellectual and spiritual career and after some twenty-four years, the mature youth comes back to society in his new garb and his new power. The creative energy conserved by him during the long period of continence is used on the spiritual plane: animated by his creative vigour, "the four quarters live."

Brahmacharya is the discipline of body and mind, for attaining the fitness for Vedic knowledge. Much stress was laid on the control and sublimation of the sex energy. Physical cleanliness was meticulously attended to. The life in the open, outside the common human habitations, in sunlight and fresh air, and bathing in rivers and lakes, plain food, hard work, both physical and intellectual, the performance of the fire ritual, hard bed, early rising, and constant personal supervision of the Acharya contributed to Spartan virtues. But the Brahmachari did not grow like a hermit secluded from society; he took his almost daily round of the neighbouring village begging his up-keep, and usually meeting the mistress of the household with "Madam, give me alms." A filial attitude was cultivated towards women. Again, the Brahmachari was the worshipper of Sarasvati, the

Divine Mother, at whose breast he prayed to be privileged to feed. As a rule the Acharya was a married man and lived with his family and the Brahmachari was adopted into it.

In the Vedas the ideal of Brahmacharya stood for a preparation for life and not for entire life of man. Just as in the social life the ideal of Brahman was co-ordinated with that of Kshatra, so in the personal life of individuals the ideal of Brahmacharya was co-ordinated with that of family life.

Just as there were two interests in social life, so there were two ways, one succeeding the other, in individual life. Here is the broad foundation of the original conception of Varnashrama Dharma. Later on, a return to the forest (Vanaprastha) to resume Brahmacharya was set as the ideal of later life (after fifty), and later still, there was the ideal of complete renunciation (Sannyasa) for the fourth stage of life, though from the earliest times there were men and women who, in their individual way, remained celibates.

In its primary sense Brahman means prayer. Then it means the body of verses in the Vedas meant for prayer. Then the term implies the Vedas as books of prayer and wisdom. There is a Deity, Brahmanaspati, the Lord of Prayer. Brahmacharya means the discipline for the mastery of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge. Then Brahman has stood for the Object of Prayer, the Divinity especially contemplated as an impersonal Reality.

The word Brahmana has also a more specific sense according to the second meaning given above: it means one who knows Brahman or the text of the Veda. It was a marvellous feat in the whole cultural history of the world for the Indians to have preserved the Vedas by oral tradition, taking every care to maintain each syllable

of the text unimpaired. The men who carried the Vedas in their heads deserved well of society, and a traditional social law gave them a privileged position in that they were immune from capital punishment. For to kill a Brahmana would be, perhaps, to obstruct the oral tradition of a Veda carried on by him.

Yajna is the Vedic ritual of offering libation or oblation on the sacrificial fire, lighted on an altar. Another ritual was the offering of Soma juice. Whatever the names of the Deities worshipped, the ritual was the same. The Vedic ritual was picturesque, accompanied by chanting, singing (Sama hymns were musically rendered) and also acting. There was the simple domestic sacrifice (Agnihotra); there were also great seasonal sacrifices held in open spaces and attended by vast numbers of people. Political colouring was given to the ritual by the institutions of Ashvamedha (which used to be preceded by a challenge to the neighbouring states to a tournament at arms) and Rajasuya (which was utilised by emperors to obtain homage from their vassals).

Being a great public institution the Yajna developed complicated rituals that added to the attractiveness of the ceremonial side of prayer. In course of time, therefore, it needed a class of experts from among Brahmanas, the knowers of the Vedas, to carry on the ritual with the appropriate ceremony. This formal part of the worship began to be known as Karmakanda, the "action part" of the religion.

The conception of Yajna was much widened by the adoption of five systems of "great Yajnas," in which, in addition to the usual Agnihotra, the study and teaching of Vedas (Brahmayajna), service of the guest (Nriyajna), giving food to lower creatures (Bhutayajna) and service of or offering of oblation to Manes (Pitriyajna), were re-

cognised as great Yajnas (Mahayajnas). The *Bhagavad-Gita,* in its own remarkable way, distinguishes the spirit of Yajna from its forms. If the spirit is accepted then the material part of Yajna, related to the fire, fuel, and the oblation, may be taken not only literally but also symbolically and figuratively.

Even in the Veda we find Yajna taken in the figurative sense.

The spiritualization of the concept of Yajna is quite in keeping with the Indian system of thought. The institution of Yajna as ritual, however, had specialities of its own. It emphasised, for one thing, the realistic elements of the Vedic religion. The glorious lustre of the blazing fire, the sweet perfume of the burnt ghee, the blades of grass, the cooked offering, the crushed *soma* and all the other material of Yajna had their direct and purifying effect on the minds of the worshippers.

And the acting of the priests, the chanting and the music, and the mass action in making the final offering—these carried an immediacy of appeal which was of no small spiritual value.

IV

THE RAMAYANA

(i) THE IMMORTAL EPIC

AMONG all great festivals, which spread joy and comradeship amongst all our people, there is none which is so popular, more especially in Northern India, than the celebration of the story of Rama and Sita. Valmiki wrote his immortal epic and, in later days, Tulsidas, writing in homely language, made this story a part of the texture of the lives of our people. A story and a book which has had this powerful influence on millions of people, during some millenniums of our changing history, must have peculiar virtue in it.

Ever since my boyhood, I have been fascinated by this India of ours. It has been a mystery often, a revelation sometimes, and the more I have sought to understand her the more I have been impressed by her powerful personality which has endured through the ages. In a sense, my life has been a quest, an attempt to understand this great motherland of ours with its infinite variety and its basic unity. No one who sees a part of India only and not the rest can have a full picture of her. No one who sees the present only and has no realisation of the panorama of her past, can understand her, for our roots go deep down into the past of the history of man. Innumerable weeds have grown up from time to time. But they have

never succeeded in uprooting those deep roots which have fashioned our destiny for good or ill. Out of that distant past, which is history, and the present, which is the burden of today, the future of India is gradually taking shape.

We must have an intellectual understanding of these mighty processes of history. We must have even more, an emotional awareness of our past and present, in order to try to give a right direction to the future. I do not think any person can understand India or her people fully without possessing a knowledge of the two magnificent epics that are India's pride and treasure.

(ii) SRI RAMACHANDRA

THE *Ramayana* is a story of perennial interest. It has swayed the hearts and minds of millions of Hindus for countless ages; it has inspired them to high thinking, noble effort and right conduct. Even today, there is hardly a village in India where the *Ramayana* story is not told and expounded in Sanskrit, or in the vernacular language, to hundreds of men, women and children who listen to the discourse with rapt and rapturous attention. Apart from daily or occasional expositions, it is no exaggeration to say that young children are fed by the womenfolk with the main incidents of the story together with their mother's milk.

Romesh Chandra Dutt has rightly observed that "there is not a Hindu woman, whose earliest and tenderest recollections do not cling round the story of Sita's sufferings and Sita's faithfulness, told in the nursery, taught in the family circle, remembered and cherished through life". Referring to the two great epics of ancient

India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Jawaharlal Nehru says this in his *Discovery of India*—"I do not know any book anywhere which has exercised such a continuous and pervasive influence on the mass-mind as these two. Dating back to a remote antiquity, they are still a living force in the life of the Indian people".

There are many works in different languages which deal with the lives of Sri Rama and Sita, in prose as well as in poetry. We have the *Raghuvamsha* of Kalidasa in which Rama's life and achievements figure prominently. Sanskrit dramas written by authors of great eminence, like Bhavabhuti and Murari, deal with various episodes in Rama's life. It may perhaps be claimed, however, that the *Ramayana* of Valmiki stands foremost amongst them all. It is one of the greatest epics of the world. It is known as the आदिकाव्य (*Adi Kavya*) in Sanskrit as it is the first piece of genuine Sanskrit epic poetry. It consists of 24,000 verses in six cantos The style is simple and mellifluous. There are no harsh words to grate on the ear. The story moves smoothly like the gently flowing water in an expansive river. The lilt of the poetry is lovely.

The work is a supreme example of the definition, वाक्यं रसात्मकं काव्यं. All nine *rasas* or sentiments from शृङ्गार (*Shringara*) to शान्त (*Shanta*) are finely portrayed in the course of the work. Valmiki is famous for his similes and Kalidasa is largely his follower in this respect. Even those who do not know Sanskrit love to hear the original read, as the sounds fall softly on the ear and thrill the heart. Valmiki's *Ramayana* is a masterpiece of literature and attests to the high scale reached by the Hindu civilization in ancient times

Apart from its excellence as a work of art in poetic

composition, it is regarded as a sacred text, as is evident from this *shloka*:

> शृण्वन्रामायण भक्त्या य: पादं पदमेव वा ।
> स याति ब्रह्मण स्थानं ब्रह्मणा पूज्यते सदा ॥

Devout Hindus worship the book. The very name of Rama is the holy of holies. It is the protecting amulet or charm, the तारक मत्र. The sanctity of the name is thus glorified in the drama called *Hanumannataka* :

> कल्याणानां निधान कलिमलमथन पावन पावनानाम् ।
> पाथेयं यन्मुमुक्षो सपदि परपदप्राप्तये प्रस्थितस्य ॥
> विश्रामस्थानमेक कविवरवचसा जीवन सज्जनानाम् ।
> बीज धर्मद्रुमस्य प्रभवतु भवतां भूतये रामनाम ॥

The *Ramayana* expounds lofty ethics and sublime philosophy in a masterly manner. It indicates and illustrates right conduct, individual and social; and it postulates in many places what is compendiously known as *Sanatana Dharma* or the Eternal Laws. The work is used and read times without number as a prayer-book of devotional poems by aspirants to earthly prosperity and other-worldly happiness. Mainly for two reasons is it called an अनुग्रह ग्रन्थ (*Anugraha-Grantha*). Valmiki, an unlettered sage, wrote the work as a result of Lord Brahma's grace. He conferred on Valmiki supernatural vision which enabled Him to see every detail of Rama's life and gave him the ability to express his ideas in choice verse. The Lord pronounced a benediction and said that the *Ramayana* would be in vogue on earth as long as the mountains and rivers last:

> यावत्स्थास्यन्ति गिरय: सरितश्च महीतले ।
> तावद्रामायणकथा लोकेषु प्रचरिष्यति ॥

In his turn, Valmiki states in several places that those

who read his *Ramayana* will enjoy in abundant measure the blessing of the Lord:

आयुष्यमारोग्यकरं यशस्यं सौभ्रातृकं बुद्धिकरं शुभं च ।
श्रोतव्यमेतन्नियमेन सद्भिराख्यानमोजस्करमृद्धिकामैः ॥

Of late, there has been a rather acute controversy on the question whether Sri Rama was an *avatar* or incarnation of God, or whether he was an ordinary mortal, born as a prince of Ayodhya, who strove to acquire the divine virtues. The orthodox and conventional school of thought adopts the former theory. The modern mind, as typified by the late Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, would adopt the latter view. In my humble opinion, however, the dispute is a futile one. It is surely more important to discover what Valmiki had in mind when he wrote the work and how he intended his readers to study and interpret it. From this standpoint, there is hardly any doubt that his intention was to delineate Rama as an *avatar.* At the very commencement of the work, we find reference to the request made to Sri Maha Vishnu by the assembled gods, asking Him to make up his mind to be born on this earth as Dasharatha's son or sons for the destruction of the wicked Ravana. It is not easy to dismiss this chapter as a later interpolation as it forms an integral part of the story relating the Ashvamedha sacrifice undertaken by the King. In the famous encounter between Rama and Parashurama, the vanquished Brahmin sage proclaims Rama to be Narayana, the slayer of Madhu:

अक्षयं मधुहन्तारं जानामि त्वां सुरोत्तमम् ।

The Yuddha Kanda makes this very clear. In chapter 35, Malyavan the maternal grandfather of Ravana tells him that he thinks Rama was Vishnu:

विष्णुं मन्यामहे रामं मानुषं देहमास्थितम् ।

Ravana himself says in Chapter 72:

तं मन्ये राघवं वीरं नारायणमनामयम् ।

After exhibiting marvellous skill in archery against hordes of Rakshasas, in chapter 94 of the Yuddha Kanda, Rama exclaims to the admiring Vanara spectators around him that such prowess is to be seen only in himself or in Shiva:

एतदस्त्रबलं दिव्य मम वा त्र्यंबकस्य वा ।

Again, in Mandodari's lamentation over her lord's death (Chapter 114 v. 12-13), she refers to Rama in these terms.

तमसः परमो धाता शङ्खचक्रगदाधरः ।
श्रीवत्सवक्षा नित्यश्रीरजय्यः शाश्वतो ध्रुवः ॥
मानुषं रूपमास्थाय विष्णुः सत्यपराक्रमः ।

After Ravana is killed and the battle won, all the Devas, headed by Brahma, come on to the scene to pronounce their benediction on the conqueror. They expressly say that he is Narayana, who descended into this world to rid it of the atrocious Ravana. It is true that Rama says in reply that he regards himself as a man born as the son of Dasharatha. But this very answer would be inappropriate if a mere man uttered it. Throughout the Aranya Kanda during his visits to several sages, especially Atri and Agastya, the author makes it fairly clear that Rama was regarded as an incarnation and was thus worshipped by the sages.

The incarnation hypothesis derives support from the famous *shlokas* in chapter 4 of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* when we remember the history of Rama's birth:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

It is further reinforced by the verse which is usually recited every day as preliminary to the devotional study of the *Ramayana*, wherein it is stated that when God, who can be known and realised only by the study of the Vedas, was born as the son of Dasharatha, the Vedas themselves took shape as the *Ramayana* of Valmiki:

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे ।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत् साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥

In his *Gitagovinda*, Jayadeva takes Rama to be an *avatar* of Vishnu in this well-known *shloka* which mentions the ten incarnations:

वेदानुद्धरते जगन्निवहते भूगोलमुद्बिभ्रते ।
दैत्यं दारयते बलिं छलयते क्षत्रक्षय कुर्वते ॥
पौलस्त्यं जयते हलं कलयते कारुण्यमातन्वते ।
म्लेच्छान् मूर्च्छयते दशाकृतिकृते कृष्णाय तुभ्यं नमः ॥

While it can therefore be maintained with every justification that Valmiki wanted us to take this view of Rama, it is at the same time possible to interpret the *Ramayana* from the angle of approach adopted by modern critics. There is nothing wrong in it. It does not in any way mitigate the reverence due to, or abate our worship of, Sri Rama, if we regard him as an ordinary man elevated to the pedestal of divinity. On the contrary, pursuit along this line of thought enables us to get over and explain some of the alleged defects in the hero's life and conduct. A superman is still a man, though infinitely better than the rest of his kind and he must obviously be subject to some human failings. Under the stress of unbearable misfortune, it is not surprising if Rama wondered at the weakness of his father in yielding to the angry entreaties of the charming Kaikeyi. To become unhinged in mind at the loss of a dear and beloved wife is but

natural. To kill Vali from a hidden shelter was justified by force of circumstances as was his alliance with Sugriva. Rama's suspicion that Bharata may like to have the kingdom for himself and not exactly welcome his return to Ayodhya was a thought which would have occurred to most persons placed in a similar situation. One who knew that he was Lord Narayana himself and that Sita was none other than Lakshmi would not have put her to so many ordeals.

Such defects and failings in Rama's life are not, however, really inconsistent with the *avatar* theory. Once God comes down to earth as a man, he must play the role which he has assumed. He covers himself with his own *maya* and is then subject to delusion as much as ordinary human beings are. It is only at the end of the mission that he withdraws himself from his projected activities and becomes Godhead once again. Sometimes, he has to be reminded of the termination of his work, as Rama was, after he had killed Ravana.

The epic *Mahabharata* is known as the fifth Veda and contains the *Bhagavad-Gita* as well as the famous teachings of Bhishma to the Pandava brothers in the Shanti and Anushasanika *parvas*. Notwithstanding the fact, however, that eminent scholars consider it a veritable treasure-house of wisdom, it does not enjoy the same prestige and popularity as the *Ramayana*. Why is this? What is the secret of the magic spell that the *Ramayana* has over us all? Is it due to the intrinsic worth of the story, the excellence of the poetry, or the wonderful delineation of characters, the faith and devotion of the readers, the enormous spiritual value attached to Rama's name? Or is it in its value as an aid in the matter of plain living, high thinking and spiritual progress? Probably, it is a combination of all these factors, though each

by itself is sufficiently potent to explain its hold on our minds. To read the *Ramayana* from the beginning to the end is to succumb to its sweet and pervasive influence.

It is difficult to single out any portion or portions as better than the rest. But if one should be tempted to make a selection, reference might in particular be made to the accounts of the meeting of Rama and Parashurama, the anguish and sorrow of Dasharatha when the two boons are extracted from him by Kaikeyi, Lakshmana's indignation over his father's conduct, the conversation between Sita and Anasuya, the description of the brothers by Hanuman, Tara's lament over Vali's death, Sita's admonition of Ravana, her lonely suffering in the Ashoka garden with the Rakshasi guard round her, and Hanuman's message to Ravana. In the Yuddha Kanda, the fights between Lakshmana and Indrajit on the one hand and Rama and Ravana on the other are powerfully vivid and realistic and almost make us feel spectators of a battle before our eyes

Valmiki excels in description of forests and the hermitages of sages. Nature, in all its aspects and varieties—trees, mountains, rivers, clouds, dawn, sunset, had a great fascination for him. His sketches of some of the sages have a deft touch and they dwell on the greatness of penance and the sublimity of a spiritual life of self-realisation.

No part of the *Ramayana* can be said to be dull or prosaic; every bit of it is interesting as a story and excellent as poetry. There is a consensus of opinion, however, that the Sundara Kanda covering the exploits, valour and courage of Hanuman, constitutes the best portion. While this may be true, I would venture to give higher praise to the Ayodhya Kanda which delineates and describes human passions and feelings and mental conflicts

and emotions in a masterly way. It contains vivid pictures of the nobility of Sri Rama, the weakness of Dasharatha, the craftiness of Kaikeyi, the fulmination of Lakshmana against destiny, the devotion of Sita, the dignity of Kausalya, the wisdom of Sumitra, the friendship of Guha, and the lofty generosity of Bharata. A story told about the late Jagadguru of Sringeri, Sri Narasimha Bharati Swami, is that he devoted the whole of one afternoon to reading this canto from the beginning to end. He was so entranced by its beauty that he became forgetful of the host of admiring devotees who surrounded him and he sat shedding tears of joy and sorrow as the story unfolded itself step by step and stage by stage. When so great a Yogi as he can be thus moved, one wonders to what extent we ordinary mortals can be affected, with no control over our mind or senses and who are a prey to desires and ambitions, hopes and frustrations, attachments and hatreds!

(iii) THE EPIC STORY

THERE are two great epics in the Sanskrit language, which are very ancient. Of course, there are hundreds of other epic poems. I am now going to speak to you of the two most ancient epics, called the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The oldest of these epics is called the *Ramayana* or "The Life of Rama."

The name of the poet, or sage, was Valmiki. And this is how he became a poet.

One day as this sage, Valmiki, was going to bathe in the holy river Ganges, he saw a pair of doves wheeling round and round, and kissing each other. The sage looked up and was pleased at the sight, but in a second an arrow whisked past him and killed the male dove. As

the dove fell down on the ground, the female dove went on whirling round and round the dead body of its companion in grief. In a moment the poet became miserable, and looking round, he saw the hunter. "Thou art a wretch," he cried, "without the smallest mercy! Thy slaying hand would not even stop for love!" "What is this? What am I saying?" the poet thought to himself, "I have never spoken in this sort of way before." And then a voice came: "Be not afraid. This is poetry that is coming out of your mouth. Write the life of Rama in poetic language for the benefit of the world." And that is how the poem first began. The first verse sprang out of pity, from the mouth of Valmiki, the first poet. And it was after that, that he wrote the beautiful *Ramayana*, "The Life of Rama".

There was an ancient Indian town called Ayodhya—and it exists even in modern times. There, in ancient times, reigned a king called Dasharatha. He had three queens, but the king had not any children by them. And like good Hindus, the king and the queens all went on pilgrimages fasting and praying, that they might have children; and, in good time, four sons were born. The eldest of them was Rama. As it should be, these four brothers were thoroughly educated in all branches of learning.

Now, there was another king, called Janaka, and this king had a beautiful daughter named Sita. Sita was found in a field; she was a daughter of the Earth, and was born without parents. All sorts of miraculous birth were common in the mythological lore of India. Sita, being the daughter of the Earth, was pure and immaculate. She was brought up by King Janaka. When she was of a marriageable age, the king wanted to find a suitable husband for her.

There were numbers of princes who aspired for the hand of Sita; the test demanded on this occasion was the breaking of a huge bow, called Haradhanu. All the princes put forth all their strength to accomplish this feat, but failed. Finally, Rama took the mighty bow in his hands and with easy grace broke it in twain. Thus Sita selected Rama, the son of King Dasharatha for her husband, and they were wedded with great rejoicings. Then, Rama took his bride to his home, and his old father thought that the time was now come for him to retire and appoint Rama as Yuvaraja. Everything was accordingly made ready for the ceremony, and the whole country was jubilant over the affair, when the youngest queen, Kaikeyi, was reminded by one of her maidservants of two promises made to her by the king long ago. At one time she had pleased the king very much, and he offered to grant her two boons: "Ask any two things in my power and I will grant them to you," said he, but she made no request then. She had forgotten all about it; but the evil-minded maidservant in her employ began to work upon her jealousy with regard to Rama being installed on the throne, and insinuated to her how nice it would be for her if her own son had succeeded the king, until the queen was almost mad with jealousy. Then the servant suggested to her to ask from the king the two promised boons: one would be that her own son Bharata should be placed on the throne, and the other, that Rama should be sent to the forest and be exiled for fourteen years.

Now, Rama was the life and soul of the old king and when this wicked request was made to him, he as a king felt he could not go back on his word. So he did not know what to do. But Rama came to the rescue and willingly offered to give up the throne and go into exile, so that his father might not be guilty of falsehood. So Rama

went into exile for fourteen years, accompanied by his loving wife Sita and his devoted brother Lakshmana, who would on no account be parted from him.

The Aryans did not know who were the inhabitants of these wild forests. In those days the forest tribes they called "monkeys," and some of the so-called "monkeys," if unusually strong and powerful, were called "demons."

So, into the forest, inhabited by demons and monkeys, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita went. When Sita had offered to accompany Rama, he exclaimed, "How can you, a princess, face hardships and accompany me into a forest full of unknown dangers?" But Sita replied: "Wherever Rama goes, there goes Sita. How can you talk of 'princess' and 'royal birth' to me? I go before you!" So, Sita went. And the younger brother, he also went with them. They penetrated far into the forest, until they reached the river Godavari. On the banks of the river they built little cottages, and Rama and Lakshmana used to hunt deer and collect fruits. After they had lived thus for some time, one day there came a giantess. She was the sister of the giant king of Lanka (Ceylon). Roaming through the forest at will, she came across Rama, and seeing that he was a very handsome man, she fell in love with him at once. But Rama was the purest of men, and also he was a married man, so of course he could not return her love. In revenge, she went to her brother, the giant king, and told him all about the beautiful Sita, the wife of Rama.

Rama was the most powerful of mortals; there were no giants nor demons, nor anybody else strong enough to conquer him. So, the giant king had to resort to subterfuge. He got hold of another giant who was a magician and changed him into a beautiful, golden deer; and the deer went prancing round about the place where Rama

lived, until Sita was fascinated by its beauty and asked Rama to go and capture the deer for her. Rama went into the forest to catch the deer, leaving his brother in charge of Sita. Then Lakshmana laid a circle of fire round the cottage, and he said to Sita: "To-day I see something may befall you; and, therefore, I tell you not to go outside of this magic circle. Some danger may befall you if you do." In the meanwhile, Rama had pierced the magic deer with his arrow, and immediately the deer changed into the form of a man and died.

Immediately at the cottage was heard the voice of Rama crying, "Oh, Lakshmana, come to my help!" and Sita said: "Lakshmana, go at once into the forest to help Rama!" "That is not Rama's voice," protested Lakshmana. But at the entreaties of Sita, Lakshmana had to go in search of Rama. As soon as he went away, the giant king who had taken the form of a mendicant monk stood at the gate and asked for alms. "Wait awhile," said Sita, "until my husband comes back and I will give you plentiful alms." "I cannot wait, good lady," said he, "I am very hungry, give me anything you have." At this, Sita who had a few fruits in the cottage, brought them out. But the mendicant monk after many persuasions prevailed upon her to bring the alms to him, assuring her that she need have no fear as he was a holy person. So Sita came out of the magic circle, and immediately the seeming monk assumed his giant body, and grasping Sita in his arms he called his magic chariot, and putting her therein, he fled with the weeping Sita. Poor Sita! She was utterly helpless, nobody was there to come to her aid. As the giant was carrying her away, she took off a few of the ornaments from her arms and at intervals dropped them to the ground.

She was taken by Ravana to his kingdom, Lanka,

the island of Ceylon. He made proposals to her to become his queen, and tempted her in many ways to accede to his request. But Sita who was chastity itself, would not even speak to the giant, and he to punish her, made her live under a tree, day and night, until she should consent to be his wife.

When Rama and Lakshmana returned to the cottage and found that Sita was not there, their grief knew no bounds. They could not imagine what had become of her. The two brothers went on, seeking everywhere for Sita, but could find no trace of her. After long searching, they came across a group of "monkeys", and in the midst of them was Hanuman, the "divine monkey".

Rama, at last, fell in with these monkeys. They told him that they had seen flying through the sky a chariot, in which was seated a demon who was carrying away a most beautiful lady, and that she was weeping bitterly and as the chariot passed over their heads she dropped one of her ornaments to attract their attention. Then they showed Rama the ornament and he recognised it at once, saying, "Yes, it is Sita's." Then, the monkeys told Rama who this demon king was and where he lived, and then they all went to seek for him.

Now, the monkey-king Vali and his younger brother Sugriva were then fighting among themselves for the kingdom. The younger brother was helped by Rama, and he regained the kingdom from Vali, who had driven him away; and he, in return, promised to help Rama. They searched the country all round, but could not find Sita. At last Hanuman leaped by one bound from the coast of India to the island of Ceylon, and there went looking all over Lanka for Sita, but nowhere could he find her.

You see, this giant king had conquered the gods, the men, in fact, the whole world; and he had collected all

the beautiful women and made them his concubines. So Hanuman thought to himself, "Sita cannot be with them in the palace. She would rather die than be in such a place". So Hanuman went to seek for her elsewhere. At last, he found Sita under a tree, pale and thin, like the new moon that lies low in the horizon. Now Hanuman took the form of a little monkey, and settled on the tree, and there he witnessed how giantesses sent by Ravana came and tried to frighten Sita into submission, but she would not even listen to the name of the giant king.

Then, Hanuman came nearer to Sita and told her how he became the messenger of Rama, who had sent him to find out where Sita was; and Hanuman showed to Sita the signet ring which Rama had given as a token for establishing his identity. He also informed her that as soon as Rama would know her whereabouts, he would come with an army and conquer the giant and recover her. However, he suggested to Sita that if she wished it, he would take her on his shoulders and could with one leap clear the ocean and get back to Rama. But Sita could not bear the idea, as she was chastity itself, and could not touch the body of any man except her husband. So, Sita remained where she was. But she gave him a jewel from her hair to carry to Rama; and with that Hanuman returned.

Learning everything about Sita from Hanuman, Rama collected an army, and with it marched towards the southernmost point of India. There Rama's monkeys built a huge bridge, called Setu-Bandha, connecting India with Ceylon. In very low water even now it is possible to cross from India to Ceylon over the sand-banks there.

Now Rama was God incarnate, otherwise how could he have done all these things? He was an Incarnation of

God, according to the Hindus. They in India believe him to be the seventh Incarnation of God.

The monkeys removed whole hills, placed them in the sea and covered them with stones and trees, thus making a huge embankment. A little squirrel, so it is said, was there rolling himself in the sand and running backwards and forwards on to the bridge and shaking himself. Thus in his small way he was working for the bridge of Rama by putting in sand. The monkeys laughed, for they were bringing whole mountains, whole forests, huge loads of sand for the bridge—so they laughed at the little squirrel rolling in the sand and then shaking himself. But Rama saw it and remarked: "Blessed be the little squirrel; he is doing his work to the best of his ability, and he is therefore quite as great as the greatest of you." Then he gently stroked the squirrel on the back, and the marks of Rama's fingers running lengthways, are seen on the squirrel's back to this day.

Now, when the bridge was finished, the whole army of monkeys, led by Rama and his brother, entered Ceylon. For several months afterwards tremendous war and bloodshed followed. At last, this demon king Ravana was conquered and killed, and his capital, with all the palaces and everything, which were entirely of solid gold, was taken. Rama gave them over to Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, and seated him on the throne in the place of his brother, as a return for the valuable services rendered by him to Rama during the war.

Then Rama with Sita and his followers left Lanka. But there ran a murmur among the followers. "The test! The test!" they cried, "Sita has not given the test that she was perfectly pure in Ravana's household." "Pure! She is chastity itself!" exclaimed Rama. "Never mind! We want the test," persisted the people. Subse-

quently a huge sacrificial fire was made ready, into which Sita had to plunge herself. Rama was in agony, thinking that Sita was lost; but in a moment the god of fire himself appeared with a throne upon his head, and upon the throne was Sita. Then, there was universal rejoicing, and everybody was satisfied.

Early during the period of exile, Bharata, the younger brother had come and informed Rama, of the death of the old king and vehemently insisted on his occupying the throne. During Rama's exile Bharata would on no account ascend the throne, and out of respect placed a pair of Rama's wooden shoes on it as a substitute for his brother. Then Rama returned to his capital, and by the common consent of his people he became the king of Ayodhya.

After Rama regained his kingdom, he took the necessary vows which in olden times the king had to take for the benefit of his people. The king was the slave of his people, and had to bow to public opinion, as we shall see later on. Rama passed a few years in happiness with Sita, when the people again began to murmur that Sita had been stolen by a demon, and carried across the ocean. They were not satisfied with the former test and clamoured for another test, otherwise she must be banished.

In order to satisfy the demands of the people, Sita was banished, and left to live in the forest, where was the hermitage of the sage and poet Valmiki. The sage found poor Sita weeping and forlorn, and hearing her sad story he sheltered her in his Ashrama. Sita was expecting soon to become a mother, and she gave birth to twin boys. The poet never told the children who they were. He brought them up together in the Brahmacharin life. He then composed the poem known as *Ramayana*, set it to

music, and dramatised it, and taught Rama's two children how to recite and sing it.

There came a time when Rama was going to perform a huge Sacrifice, or *Yajna*, such as the old kings used to celebrate. But no ceremony in India can be performed by a married man without his wife: he must have the wife with him, the *Sahadharmini*, the "co-religionist"—that is the expression for a wife. The Hindu householder has to perform hundreds of ceremonies, but not one can be duly performed according to the Shastras, if he has not a wife to complement it with her part in it.

Now Rama's wife was not with him then, as she had been banished. So, the people asked him to marry again. But at this request Rama for the first time in his life stood against the people. He said: "This cannot be. My life is Sita's." So, as a substitute, a golden statue of Sita was made, in order that the ceremony could be accomplished. They arranged even a dramatic entertainment, to enhance the religious feeling in this great festival. Valmiki, the great sage-poet, came with his pupils, Lava and Kusha, the unknown sons of Rama. A stage had been erected and everything was ready for the performance. Rama and his brothers attended with all his nobles and his people, a vast audience. Under the direction of Valmiki, the life of Rama was sung by Lava and Kusha, who fascinated the whole assembly by their charming voice and appearance. Poor Rama was nearly maddened, and when in the drama, the scene of Sita's exile came about, he did not know what to do. Then the sage said to him: "Do not be grieved, for I will show you Sita." Then Sita was brought upon the stage and Rama was delighted to see his wife. All of a sudden, the old murmur arose: "The test! The test!" Poor Sita was so terribly overcome by the repeated cruel slight on her reputation that it was more than she could

bear. She appealed to the gods to testify to her innocence, when the Earth opened and Sita exclaimed, "Here is the test," and vanished into the bosom of the Earth. The people were taken aback at this tragic end. And Rama was overwhelmed with grief.

A few days after Sita's disappearance a messenger came to Rama from the gods, who intimated to him that his mission on earth was finished and he was to return to heaven. These tidings brought to him the recognition of his own real Self. He plunged into the waters of Sarayu, the mighty river that laved his capital, and joined Sita in the other world.

This is the great, ancient epic of India. When you study these characters, you can at once find out how different is the ideal in India from that of the West. For the race, Sita stands as the ideal of suffering. The West says, "Do! Show your power by doing" India says, "Show your power by suffering." The West has solved the problem of how much a man can have: India has solved the problem of how little a man can have. The two extremes, you see. Sita is typical of India—the idealised India. The question is not whether she ever lived, whether the story is history or not, we know that the ideal is there. There is no other Pauranika story that has so permeated the whole nation, so entered into its very life, and has so mingled in every drop of blood of the race, as this ideal of Sita. Sita is the name in India for everything that is good, pure and holy; everything that in woman we call womanly. Through all the suffering she experiences, there is not one harsh word against Rama. She takes it as her own duty, and performs her own part in it. Think of the terrible injustice of her being exiled to the forest! But Sita knows no bitterness. That is, again, the Indian ideal.

Says the ancient Buddha: "When a man hurts you, and you turn back to hurt him, that would not cure the first injury; it would only create in the world one more wickedness." Sita was a true Indian by nature; she never returned injury.

V

THE MAHABHARATA

(i) VEDA VYASA, THE AUTHOR

According to certain scholars, Vyasa lived 3800 years ago. But recent excavations at Hastinapur indicate that he was born after the Vedic age had come to an end, about B.C. 950.

The rolling Sarasvati, on the banks of which the *rishis* had composed and chanted the Vedic *mantras*, had already dried up. Its waters now flowed westward and the current had come to be called Yamuna. The holy river only lived in the memory of men as the goddess of learning. For centuries now the Aryan and non-Aryan blood had been freely mixed. Indian culture, the result of Aryo-Dravidian impact, was at its post-natal vigour.

In the hey-day of Vedic life, the Vashishthas—the Pure—were a great family of Vedic *rishis*, whose sacred chants survive today in a section of the *Rig-Veda*. The most outstanding of the Vashishthas was revered as one of the fathers of the race. It was he who had led the armies of the Aryan king Sudas against ten Aryan and non-Aryan kings headed by Vishvamitra, and who finally vanquished them in the Battle of the Ten Kings, *Dasharajna*.

Sahasrarjuna had come from the half-explored banks of the Narmada; had spread terror in Sapta-sindhu, the Vedic Punjab ; devastated the Aryan settlements and the sacred *ashramas* and brought the Vedic Age to a close.

Parashurama, the great Bhrigu, had risen, however, in irresistible might, destroyed the wicked kings and saved Aryan society. The memory of his mighty exploits was still an unfailing source of strength.

Aryan conquerors had now founded fresh kingdoms on the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna, the most notable of which was ruled by the Bharatas from Hastinapur and this was both the sword and the shield of *Arya-Dharma*.

One day as the sage Parashara, the grandson of the great Vashishtha, was crossing the Yamuna in a boat, he took a fancy to the fisherman's lovely daughter who was ferrying him across. To this girl, Satyavati, was born a son, dark-hued like the mother. He was named Krishna. Born on an island in the Yamuna near modern Kalpi in the Hamirpur district in U.P., he was also called Dvaipayana.

When Krishna had grown up he left his mother. It is likely that he joined his father and was brought up in the later tradition of the Vashishthas. The boy had the Vashishtha heritage : a massive intellect and unfailing insight, a mastery of words and a passion for self-perfection. He took to the ascetic life. He had, however, an only son, Shuka, the offspring of a momentary lapse.

The Vedic gods had surrendered their pre-eminence to the non-Aryan God Shiva, called Ishana, the Great Lord. Krishna turned to Him when he needed strength. But Narayana Rishi, identified with the Vedic Vishnu, was his favourite deity, for that sage of Badrinath was for him Vasudeva, God come to earth.

Krishna Dvaipayana collected the surviving Vedic *mantras*, redacted them and gave them a standard form and accent, which they still retain. Thus he gave us the source and symbol of India's eternal culture, our Book

of Ages. Because of this achievement a grateful generation named him Veda Vyasa, Vyasa for short, a name revered in India for three millenniums as no other has been.

The simple Vedic sacrifices had now been replaced by elaborate sacrificial rituals, which lasted for years. Vyasa became an adept in sacrificial lore, and performed an elaborate sacrifice himself. It is possible that he had helped in its standardization, for, a few decades after his death, we find it collected in the *Brahmanas*.

Vyasa founded and presided over a vast forest University. It may have been at Prithudaka, which is modern Pehava in the Karnal district, or at Naimisharanya itself, or anywhere in the region of Kurukshetra, which came to be known as *Brahmarshidesha,* the sacred land of the sages. His brilliant son, Shuka, the born ascetic, and his great tradition of learning. As we know, Vaishampayana's themselves great *rishis,* ably assisted him in building up a great tradition of learning. As we know, Vaishampayana's pupil, Yajnavalkya, composed the *White Yajurveda.*

From time to time Vyasa visited other sacred places in *Brahmavarta;* everywhere was a home of learning. As he visited them, he taught, inspired, uplifted, gathered wider knowledge himself and developed his spiritual horizon. He perhaps founded the *tirtha* cult, investing the lakes, into which the disappearing Sarasvati had split, with special sanctity.

Vyasa's mother, Satyavati, the charming fisher-girl, became the wife of Shantanu, the king of Hastinapur. But a few years after the king died, she was faced with disaster. Her son Vichitravirya could not, and her step-son, Bhishma, —true to his pledge not to marry—would not, save the royal house from extinction. At last in great distress, Satyavati called upon her ascetic son, Vyasa, to

continue the family line according to ancient custom. Vyasa obeyed.

Every participant was far from happy, but the demands of duty were inexorable To one of his step-brothers' wives was born the blind Dhritarashtra, to another Pandu ; to a maid-servant, who in ecstatic devotion offered herself to the sage, was born Vidura the wise.

Vyasa was not content with keeping the family intact, but devoted himself to the preservation of traditional continuity of the race He rescued the dynastic exploits of the ancient Aryan kings from oblivion and laid the foundations of *Itihasa* and *Purana* history and tradition. He was perhaps the first historian of the human race.

The vision of Vyasa gradually encompassed life in one vast concept of Dharma in all its bearings: in the strength and weakness of man, in the nature of human relationship; in the imponderable forces working in the universe, in the universal Moral Order supported by *satya*, *tapas* and *shanti*, truth, self-discipline and the all-embracing calm of the spirit.

Appearances dissolved before his penetrating gaze, he realised *Brahma*, Reality, above and beyond what is and what is not: *sat-asat-param*. He saw the limitations which bind mankind to its unhappy destiny : fear, wrath and attachment; and as he saw this, men and things, for him, were filled with a new meaning, as manifestations of God.

The Master then founded a powerful cult of ascetic followers, devoted to stern self-discipline and pledged to the uplift of man. This cult was to be reorganised more than two thousand years later by Shankaracharya, who himself, in boyhood was initiated into an order of ascetics initiated by Vyasa—or perhaps his son Shuka. Uncontrolled by a pontiff and denied the benefit of an endowed church, this body of *Sannyasis*, has, nevertheless, through

the influence of a dedicated life and an unbroken tradition of spiritual pastorship, exercised a potent influence towards redemption ever since.

Hastinapur enjoyed the hegemony of the Aryan dominions. Its elder statesmen had faith in Dharma which it was their glory to translate into terms of life. The Master interested himself in its affairs, for he did not want Bharata to be without a social and political order.

With his blessings the wife of the blind Dhritarashtra bore a hundred sons, the Kauravas. To Pandu were born the Pandavas. When his grandsons grew up, Vyasa foresaw a catastrophe ; he, therefore, advised his mother to retire to a forest.

The Kauravas were proud, insolent and grasping, while the Pandavas, though wise, valiant and fit to rule, were under the bar sinister. The conflict of their characters, temperaments and ambitions, foreshadowed the fratricidal conflict, a disaster which would render his mission to associate Dharma with the land of the Bharatas futile.

Vyasa took the old hero, Bhishma, into his confidence and, on occasions, advised Dhritarashtra and Vidura, but his efforts came to nought. The Kauravas, led by the eldest, Duryodhana, were irrepressible and neither the strength nor the wisdom of Bhishma and the other elder statesmen could persuade or overrule them. All they could do, in silent anguish, was to hold the power of Hastinapur together.

As things were, the Master saw what others could not. Dharma was bound up with the triumph of the Pandavas. He, therefore, helped them on every occasion by warnings, advice and guidance. He also sought an ally in the Yadava chief, Sri Krishna, who was an adept in arms and possessed uncanny diplomacy, a flaming personality and unbounded vision. Above all, he possessed a burning zeal

to safeguard Dharma and to destroy *Adharma*. Even while still a youth, he had killed his uncle the wicked non-Aryan Kamsa, and boldly led his loyal clansmen to distant Dwaraka.

The two Krishnas, Dvaipayana and Vasudeva, soon developed a sense of partnership. They forged a new link of power by promoting the marriage of the Pandavas with the daughter of the mighty king Drupada

In Sri Krishna's friendship for Arjuna, the third son of Pandu—which, in a way, was promoted by him—the Master saw the inseverable strength of Nara and Narayana. At the *Rajasuya* sacrifice performed by the eldest Pandava, Yudhishthira, the embodiment of righteousness, the two Krishnas joined hands to establish him in an imperial position. Each acknowledged the greatness of the other. Vyasa, as the presiding Acharya, saw Sri Krishna honoured as the foremost among men

The Master once said, "Wherever there is Sri Krishna, there is Dharma." Sri Krishna, while disclosing his Godhead to Arjuna, singled out the Master from all his contemporaries : "Among the sages, Vyasa is Me."

The Pandavas lost the throw of the dice. Before the assembled kings their proud consort, Draupadi, was subjected by the Kauravas to the grossest insult possible, and they were forced to go into the wilderness.

The thirteen years of stipulated banishment were over and yet the Kauravas were adamant : nothing, not even five villages would they give to the Pandavas Sri Krishna made a final attempt to bring peace, but He did not prevail. The seer had no illusions about the future. He warned everyone of the grim consequences which would follow the war.

Then followed the eighteen days' Battle of Kurukshetra in which most of the prominent rulers of India

north of the Tungabhadra took part. Every participant felt the fate of the land of Dharma to be in the balance, and it was in this grim struggle that for the first time they willed the all-India consciousness into existence. Ultimately, the Kauravas lost their lives and Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava, assumed the imperial sceptre. Dharma had triumphed.

After many years of wise rule, the Pandavas, with Draupadi, placed Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, on the throne and went to Heaven by way of Satopantha, a snow-peak near Badrinath.

As he lived on, the Master decided to leave for mankind the wisdom he had won. Then, to him, "Memory disclosed her face divine". Before his ancient eyes events were unfolded once again as they had happened from his own birth to the death of his grandson Parikshit; and in words simple, yet true, he composed the saga of the Bharatas, the most universal story of the human race, the *Mahabharata,* and " lit the lamp of knowledge ".

As he composed the Epic, the Master described how, in his time, different streams of life had mingled ; how the wicked had fought and lost ; how the righteous had struggled and won. As the theme grew upon him, he saw the role and mission of Sri Krishna as God incarnate and gave us a living portrait of Him. In the section called *Bhagavad-Gita,* he also conveyed His message; he also left us in vivid, matchless phrases, the Apocalypse in which Arjuna, with wondering awe, beheld in Sri Krishna the Omnipotent and heard His mandate. Thus, the Master made Him live in immortal words, so that He might live in our hearts for ever.

The *Mahabharata,* as the Master wrote it, was elaborated by his pupil, Vaishampayana, who recited it at the

snake-sacrifice of King Janamejaya in the presence of the author himself.

In spite of his learning, detachment and self-discipline, Vyasa was intensely human. His son, the great Shuka, the heir to all his gifts and achievements, was present at the snake-sacrifice, but he died soon after , for a moment, the Master broke down. He was burdened with age.

Sri Krishna was dead, and so was Parikshit, the grandson of his own grandson. His mission in life had been completed. Whatever he had done and wherever he was, was enshrined in immortal words Naturally, therefore, he contemplated ending his life, but Lord Shiva would not allow him to do so He blessed him with the strength to bear his sad bereavement with fortitude.

Vyasasthali, the spot where he was thus bidden to live, is a few miles from Kurukshetra

Not for him was the weakness of suicide

Truly has it been said . " What is not in it is not found elsewhere." Centuries have gone by ; empires have risen and fallen ; the outlook of man has changed in many respects ; but the *Mahabharata* stands changeless as human nature, reflecting the universal experience of man.

The *Puranas* rightly call Vyasa the Manu of this Age. He is India's real architect and guide— not of the stretch of land measured by the geographers and assessed by economists, but of the real, living and breathing India, the Bharat, which has survived through the ages and that will live to lead mankind into the light in the time to come.

India would not have been what it has been and will be, but for the Master.

The Master has never been for me a figment of the imagination. I have known him since my childhood, when, night after night, my mother told me the story of the *Mahabharata*. I saw him standing before me while I was

writing some of my plays and dramas, particularly *Bhagavan Kautilya.* Once, when I had that feeling, I wrote a description of what I had seen.

All these thoughts crowded in on me when I visited the spot in Naimisharanya, where, according to tradition, the Master composed the *Mahabharata.*

I felt triple joy in 1952, when I paid my worshipful tribute to him at Kalpi as I laid the foundation stone of a memorial in his honour. Now I was standing in front of the very spot on which he had composed the *Mahabharata.* An ancient banyan tree of manifold trunks stood close at hand. I was deeply moved. I took the dust on which the Master's feet had once trodden and put it on my head in all humility.

As I did so, I muttered the well-known prayer :
" To Him who is Brahma but without four faces ;
To Him who is Vishnu but with two hands ;
To Him who is Shankara, but without the third eye ;
To Vyasa in the form of God ;
To God in the form of Vyasa ;
To Vashishtha's heir, who stood self-realized in *Brahma ;*
To Him I humbly bow."

(ii) SRI KRISHNA

WHILE Orientalists discuss the problems of the historicity of Krishna and of his identity with Gopala-Krishna, Vasudeva-Krishna, Devakiputra-Krishna, Yadava-Krishna, etc., with inconclusive results, to millions of devout Hindus Sri Krishna is but the Lord Himself (*Krishnastu Bhagavan svayam*), and His mere name has brought solace to countless distressed souls. As the preacher of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* the manual of conduct for humanity,

Krishna ranks among world's greatest teachers. Biographical particulars about Krishna appear, mixed with myth and legend, in the *Mahabharata* and various Puranas, which, however, do not give a connected account of his life, and are mutually exclusive. In the following pages an attempt is made to piece together different particulars from Krishna's life, bereft of the marvellous and supernatural, and present them in a chronological order.

Krishna was the son of Vasudeva (of the Yadavas) and Devaki the daughter of Devaka, brother of king Ugrasena of Mathura. Before the birth of Krishna, Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena, had usurped the Mathura throne and had imprisoned Ugrasena and his minister Vasudeva. Relying on the prophecy of his royal astrologers that Devaki's eighth child would kill him, Kamsa used to kill the children of Devaki. Krishna was born in the prison cell at Mathura, but immediately after birth, was removed to Gokula, to the other side of the Yamuna with the aid of the prison warders and others who were dissatisfied with the tyrant Kamsa. He was brought up in Gokula as the child of Nanda and Yashoda, whose daughter was substituted for Krishna, and the baby daughter was later killed by Kamsa.

As a child, Krishna appears to have been extraordinary, and he passed through many a crisis. He was once attacked with a fatal disease named Putana, but he miraculously escaped. Thereafter, while kept underneath a waggon by his mother, he struck his feet against the wheels of the waggon with the result that the waggon was overturned and the pots and pans were upset and broken. Then, a fearful bird suddenly pounced on Krishna and carried him away in its talons. The bird fell down dead after a time and the child was found to be safe. Krishna's initiatory rites were performed along with his

elder brother Balarama's (son of Vasudeva by Rohini) by Garga, the family priest of the Vrishni race, who arrived in Gokula in secret.

As a boy Krishna was extremely handsome and endowed with profound physical strength and supernatural energy. He was the beloved of all boys and girls, and all men and women of Gokula loved him more than their own children. Once while tied to a mortar with a rope round his waist, Krishna tried to extricate himself from the rope and began to drag the mortar after him. It fell on its side and rolled after him till it stuck fast amid two Arjuna trees, which eventually were uprooted and fell down.

On account of evil omens and the onrush of hundreds of ferocious wolves, the cowherds in a body left Gokula for Vrindavan and soon settled there In Vrindavan, Krishna subjugated Kaliya, a Naga chief, and ordered him to leave the place with his tribe. Krishna used to gather his friends in the forest, and enjoyed many a game, during the course of which Balarama killed Pralamba, an Asura, who joined them dressed as a cowherd boy. In Vrindavan, instead of the usual Indrayajna current among herdsmen, Krishna established the practice of worshipping Nature, the visible manifestation of God, the Govardhana Hill. There was a heavy down-pour when the herdsmen were engaged in their new sacrifice, and through some extraordinary miraculous device, Krishna saved them all.

Vraja-lila : Then came the great dance, the Rasa, about which so much has been written. Among the Yadavas it was usual to engage in dance and song in which youths and maidens participated. The *Harivamsha* represents the Rasa as a maddening love of youthful maidens for a young man; in the *Bhagavata*, it is the deep sensual love

of passionate and sprightly girls for a passionate youth; while the *Brahmavaivarta* describes it as a gross carnality. It may be observed in this connection that Krishna was hardly a boy of eleven in Vrindavan. He had the usual Gopa taste for group dancing and singing, and these dances, as already stated, are rather a precocious manifestation of Krishna's richly artistic and vital nature. Krishna taught the herdsmen the principle of true Katyayani-puja, that without absolute surrender of self to Him, worship of Katyayani was of no avail. The *Rishipatnyakhyana* teaches that God hankers after true love.

Krishna's First Deeds. Krishna's extraordinary exploits, widespread popularity and great fame reached the ears of Kamsa, and he planned to kill the Vrishni princes Krishna and Balarama through his wrestlers. He sent Akrura as an envoy to Vrindavan with an invitation to Krishna and Balarama to visit his court and attend the wrestling bouts. Accordingly they left Vrindavan and started for Mathura. Soon after reaching Mathura, Krishna and Balarama had an affray with Kamsa's men-in-the-streets and bodyguards. In the main tournament (*Dhanurmaha*) the next day, Krishna and Balarama killed the prize-fighters. Krishna also killed the tyrant Kamsa, and reinstated Urgasena on the Mathura throne.

Krishna and Balarama then left for Avantipura near Kashi for their education at the hermitage of Sandipani. Their stay at the preceptor was, however, very short, for they were called back by the people of Mathura on account of invasion. Enraged at Kamsa's death, Jarasandha, his father-in-law, and ruler of Magadha, invaded Mathura with a large army a number of times, but Krishna repelled the invasions. Kalayavana, a Yavana chief, was instigated by Jarasandha to fight against Krishna; but the latter got Kalayavana killed by Muchukunda. To

avoid unnecessary bloodshed, Krishna ultimately left Mathura, and with his people migrated to Dwaraka on the extreme west coast and settled there. Krishna then married Rukmini, the daughter of Bhishmaka, the Vidarbha king, whom her brother intended to marry to Shishupala, the Chedi king.

Krishna and the Pandavas Krishna appears for the first time in the *Mahabharata* at the *Swayamvara* of Draupadi which he attended After the marriage of the Pandavas with Draupadi, Krishna sent them many presents. The Pandavas then re-established their sovereignty in Khandava, founded Indraprastha, and settled there, after which Krishna returned to Dwaraka.

In the course of his pilgrimage, Arjuna visited the holy Prabhasa, where Krishna came to see him and took him to Dwaraka On Krishna's advice, Arjuna captured and married his sister, Subhadra

Krishna got a magnificent Assembly Hall built for the Pandavas by Maya, the Danava architect, whose life was saved by Krishna and Arjuna in their burning of the Khandava forest Krishna then advised king Yudhishthira to perform the Rajasuya, but as a preliminary to it, visited Girivraja, the capital of Magadha, along with Bhima and Arjuna, where Bhima slew Jarasandha, the Magadha king, and the imprisoned kings were set free. At the Rajasuya, Krishna washed the feet of the Brahmanas Bhishma declared Krishna to be the Supreme God and the only person fit for *Agrapuja* (first worship), which shows that Krishna was deified in his own life time. Shishupala, the late generalissimo of Jarasandha, objected to the *Agrapuja* being offered to Krishna, censured Krishna, Bhishma and the Pandavas, and was slain by Krishna. After the successful conclusion of Yudhishthira's Rajasuya, Krishna returned to Dwaraka

The game of dice that finally led to the banishment of the Pandavas was played immediately after Krishna left for Dwaraka. During the Pandavas' exile, Krishna visited them thrice in deep forest, and later attended the marriage of Abhimanyu (son of Subhadra and Arjuna) with Uttara, daughter of king Virata, at Viratanagara. After the period of exile was over, the Pandavas demanded their share of the kingdom from Duryodhana, the Kuru prince, but the latter turned a deaf ear to all proposals from the Pandavas. Envoys were sent by each side to try to effect a compromise between the contending parties, but these proved futile. After it was found that war was inevitable, both parties tried to gather forces on their sides, and Arjuna and Duryodhana went to Dwaraka to seek the aid of Krishna. Arjuna preferred the single-handed, non-combatant Krishna as an ally who, later, became his charioteer; and Duryodhana selected the large army of veteran Narayanas Balarama preferred to remain neutral. As a last resort, Krishna himself went as the envoy of the Pandavas to Hastinapur to see if any means could be found to avoid the disastrous war His efforts were of no avail. He tried to win over Karna to the side of the Pandavas, but Karna desired to remain true and loyal to Duryodhana.

During the Bharata war, Krishna helped the Pandavas in a number of ways. On the first day, when Arjuna was unnerved at the sight of his relatives in the opposite camp and was at a loss to know his duty, Krishna preached him the "*Song Celestial*" which told him what his true work was. It is beyond the scope of the present chapter to say anything about the "*Song Celestial*". Krishna strained every nerve, physically and spiritually to bring forth victory for the Pandavas. Krishna's efficiency as a charioteer helped Arjuna a good deal He twice started

to attack Bhishma, took charge of Bhagadatta's missile which was aimed against Arjuna and expressed a number of times his readiness to kill the enemies himself. Krishna received numerous wounds and injuries in the war and sometimes was temporarily overwhelmed. In the matter of killing Bhurishrava, Drona, Karna and Duryodhana (among others) Krishna may be said to have forced the Pandavas to play frauds; but these were justifiable under the exigencies of circumstances. Many a time during the war, Krishna not only tactfully guided the Pandavas as to the particular course to be taken, but encouraged and urged them to action as also gave them spiritual advice, consolations, etc In fact, it was mainly and solely due to the important part played by Krishna in the great war that the Pandavas emerged victorious.

Yudhishthira was installed on the throne at Hastinapur, and Krishna returned to Dwaraka, to come once more to Hastinapur to be present at the Ashvamedha of Yudhishthira He revived the still-born child of Uttara, which later was named Parikshit The Ashvamedha was solemnized in all pomp and glory, and Krishna bade farewell to the Pandavas for the last time.

Then for many years, Krishna passed at Dwaraka a life of peace, pleasure and happiness, when at last there arose a fateful dissension amongst the various Yadava tribes With life of peace and luxury, the Yadavas daily grew sensuous and vicious, and became addicted to drinking. Once they went to Prabhasa to perform religious rites, leaving only women, children and old men at Dwaraka. There they enjoyed in various ways and drank heavily. From hot words they came to blows, and a great battle was fought on the holy shrine, brother fighting against brother, and kith against kin. The entire Yadu race was destroyed in the struggle, leaving only four, viz.

Krishna, Balarama, Daruka (Krishna's charioteer) and Babhru. Balarama thereafter went to the sea and gave up his life.

Krishna sent his charioteer to Hastinapur with the news and a message to Arjuna to come to Dwaraka to look after the women and children. He himself consoled the wailing women and children, and asked them to await Arjuna's arrival and then to accompany him to Hastinapur as Dwaraka was destined to be swallowed by the sea. Krishna then left Dwaraka and retired into deep forest. Arjuna came to Dwaraka, took with him the remnants of the Yadu family and installed Vajra, the only surviving grandson of Krishna, on the throne of Mathura Krishna, when in deep meditation, was hit by the arrow of a hunter who mistook him for a deer, and passed away.

The sacred spot where the Lord shuffled off His mortal coil is known as Dehotsarga about two miles to the east of the traditional Prabhasa Kshetra at the confluence of the Sarasvati, Hiranya and Tripura, which form the Triveni before joining the sea. Recently, at the time of the installation of the sacred *linga* in the Somanatha temple,—through the efforts of Sri Munshiji steps are being taken to renovate the Dehotsarga shrine in a suitable manner.

(iii) THE EPIC STORY

THE MAHABHARATA contains the story of a race descended from King Bharata, who was the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala. The central story of the *Mahabharata* is of a war between two families of cousins, one family, called the Kauravas, the other, the Pandavas—for the empire of India.

The Aryans came into India in small companies. Gradually, these tribes began to extend, until, at last,

they became the undisputed rulers of India, and then arose this fight to gain the mastery, between two branches of the same family. Those of you who have studied the *Gita* know how the book opens with a description of the battlefield, with two armies arrayed one against the other. That is the war of the *Mahabharata*.

There were two brothers, sons of the emperor. The elder one was called Dhritarashtra, and the other was called Pandu Dhritarashtra, the elder one, was born blind. According to Indian law, no blind, maimed, consumptive, or any other constitutionally diseased person, can inherit. He can only get a maintenance So, Dhritarashtra could not ascend the throne, though he was the elder son, and Pandu became the emperor

Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons and Pandu had only five. After the death of Pandu at an early age, Dhritarashtra became King of the Kurus and brought up the sons of Pandu along with his own children. When they grew up they were placed under the tutorship of the great priest-warrior, Drona, and were well trained in the various martial arts and sciences befitting princes.

The education of the princes being finished, Dhritarashtra put Yudhishthira, the eldest of the sons of Pandu, on the throne of his father. The sterling virtues of Yudhishthira and the valour and devotion of his other brothers aroused jealousies in the hearts of the sons of the blind king, and at the instigation of Duryodhana, the eldest of them, the five Pandava brothers were prevailed upon to visit Varanavata, on the plea of a religious festival that was being held there. There they were accommodated in a palace made under Duryodhana's instructions, of hemp, resin, and lac and other inflammable materials, which were subsequently set fire to secretly. But the good Vidura, the step-brother of Dhritarashtra, having become cognisant

of the evil intentions of Duryodhana and his party, had warned the Pandavas of the plot, and they managed to escape without anyone's knowledge. When the Kurus saw the house was reduced to ashes, they heaved a sigh of relief and thought all obstacles were now removed out of their path. Then the children of Dhritarashtra got hold of the kingdom.

The five Pandava brothers had fled to the forest with their mother, Kunti. They lived there by begging and went about in disguise giving themselves out as Brahmana students. Many were the hardships and adventures they encountered in the wild forests, but their fortitude of mind, and strength and valour made them conquer all dangers. So things went on until they came to hear of the approaching marriage of the princess of a neighbouring country.

King Drupada was a great king, king of the Panchalas, and his daughter, Draupadi, famed far and wide for her beauty and accomplishments, was going to choose a hero.

At a *Svayamvara* there was always a great feat of arms or something of the kind. On this occasion a mark in the form of a fish was set up high in the sky, under that fish was a wheel with a hole in the centre, continually turning round, and beneath was a tub of water. A man looking at the reflection of the fish in the tub of water was asked to send an arrow and hit the eye of the fish through the Chakra, or wheel, and he who succeeded would be married to the princess. Now, there came kings and princes from different parts of India, all anxious to win the hand of the princess, and one after another they tried their skill, and every one of them failed to hit the mark.

You know, there are four castes in India: the highest caste is that of the hereditary priest, the Brahmana; next,

is the caste of the Kshatriya, composed of kings and fighters; next, the Vaishyas, the traders or businessmen, and then, Shudras, the servants. Now, this princess was, of course, a Kshatriya, one of the second caste.

When all those princes failed in hitting the mark, then, the son of King Drupada rose up in the midst of the court and said: "The Kshatriya, the king caste has failed; now the contest is open to the other castes. Let a Brahmana, even a Shudra, take part in it; whosoever hits the mark, marries Draupadi."

Among the Brahmanas were seated the five Pandava brothers. Arjuna the third brother, was the hero of the bow. He arose and stepped forward. Now, Brahmanas as a caste are very quiet and rather timid people. Their life is one of contemplation, study, and control of the inner nature. Judge, therefore, how quiet and peaceable a people they are. When the Brahmanas saw this man get up, they thought this man was going to bring the wrath of the Kshatriyas upon them, and that they would all be killed. So they tried to dissuade him, but Arjuna did not listen to them, because he was a soldier. He lifted the bow in his hand, strung it without any effort, and drawing it, sent the arrow right through the wheel and hit the eye of the fish.

Then there was great jubilation. Draupadi, the princess, approached Arjuna and threw the beautiful garland of flowers over his head. But there arose a great cry among the princes, who could not bear the idea that this beautiful princess who was a Kshatriya should be won by a poor Brahmana, from among this huge assembly of kings and princes. So, they wanted to fight Arjuna and snatch her from him by force. The brothers had a tremendous fight with the warriors, but held their own, and carried off the bride in triumph.

The five brothers now returned home to Kunti with the princess. Brahmanas have to live by begging. So they, who lived as Brahmanas, used to go out, and what they got by begging they brought home and the mother divided it among them. Thus the five brothers, with the princess, came to the cottage where the mother lived. They shouted out to her jocosely: "Mother, we have brought home a most wonderful alms to-day." The mother replied: "Enjoy it in common, all of you, my children." Then the mother seeing the princess, exclaimed: "Oh! what have I said! it is a girl!" But what could be done? The mother's word was spoken once for all. It must not be disregarded. The mother's words must be fulfilled. She could not be made to utter an untruth, as she never had done so. So Draupadi became the common wife of all the five brothers.

Now, you know, in every society there are stages of development. Behind this epic there is a wonderful glimpse of the ancient historic times. The author of the poem mentions the fact of the five brothers marrying the same woman, but he tries to gloss it over, to find an excuse and a cause for such an act: it was the mother's command, the mother sanctioned this strange betrothal, and so on. You know, in every nation there has been a certain stage in society that allowed polyandry--all the brothers of a family would marry one wife in common. Now, this was evidently a glimpse of the past polyandrous stage.

In the meantime, the brother of the princess was perplexed in his mind and thought: "Who are these people? Who is this man whom my sister is going to marry? They have not any chariots, horses, or anything. Why, they go on foot!" So he had followed them at a distance, and at night overheard their conversation and became fully convinced that they were really Kshatriyas. Then King

Drupada came to know who they were and was greatly delighted.

Though at first much objection was raised, it was declared by Vyasa that such a marriage was allowable for these princes, and it was permitted. So the king Drupada had to yield to this polyandrous marriage, and the princess was married to the five sons of Pandu

Then the Pandavas lived in peace and prosperity and became more powerful every day. Though Duryodhana and his party conceived of fresh plots to destroy them, King Dhritarashtra was prevailed upon by the wise counsels of the elders to make peace with the Pandavas; and so he invited them home amidst the rejoicings of the people and gave them half of the kingdom Then, the five brothers built for themselves a beautiful city, called Indraprastha, and extended their dominions, laying all the people under tribute to them Then, the eldest, Yudhishthira, in order to declare himself emperor over all the kings of ancient India, decided to perform a Rajasuya Yajna, or Imperial Sacrifice, in which the conquered kings would have to come with tribute and swear allegiance, and help the performance of the Sacrifice by personal services. Sri Krishna, who had become their friend and a relative, came to them and approved of the idea. But there was one obstacle to its performance. A king, Jarasandha by name, who intended to offer a Sacrifice of a hundred kings, had eighty-six of them kept as captives with him. Sri Krishna counselled an attack on Jarasandha: so he, Bhima and Arjuna challenged the king, who accepted the challenge and was finally conquered by Bhima, after fourteen days' continuous wrestling. The captive kings were then set free.

Then the four younger brothers went out with armies on a conquering expedition, each in a different direction,

and brought all the kings under subjection to Yudhishthira. Returning, they laid all the vast wealth they secured at the feet of the eldest brother, to meet the expenses of the great Sacrifice.

So, to this Rajasuya Sacrifice all the liberated kings came, along with those conquered by the brothers, and rendered homage to Yudhishthira. King Dhritarashtra and his sons were also invited to come and take a share in the performance of the Sacrifice. At the conclusion of the Sacrifice Yudhishthira was crowned emperor, and declared a lord paramount. This was the sowing of the future feud. Duryodhana came back from the Sacrifice filled with jealousy against Yudhishthira, as their sovereignty and vast splendour and wealth were more than he could bear, and so he devised plans to effect their fall by guile, as he knew that to overcome them by force was beyond his power. This king Yudhishthira had the love of gambling, and he was challenged at an evil hour to play dice with Shakuni the crafty gambler and the evil genius of Duryodhana. In ancient India if a man of the military caste was challenged to fight he must at any price accept the challenge to uphold his honour. And if he was challenged to play dice, it was a point of honour to play, and dishonourable to decline the challenge. King Yudhishthira, says the Epic, was the incarnation of all virtues. Even he, the great sage king, had to accept the challenge. Shakuni and his party had made false dice. So Yudhishthira lost game after game, and stung with his losses, he went on with the fatal game, staking everything he had, and losing all, until his possessions, his kingdom and everything, were lost. The last stage came when, under further challenge, he had no other resources left but to stake his brothers, and then himself, and last of all, the fair Draupadi, and lost all. Now they were com-

pletely at the mercy of the Kauravas, who cast all sorts of insults upon them, and subjected Draupadi to most inhuman treatment. At last through the intervention of the blind king, they got their liberty, and were asked to return home and rule their kingdom. But Duryodhana saw the danger and forced his father to allow one more throw of the dice in which the party which would lose, should retire to the forests for twelve years, and then live unrecognised in a city for one year, but if they were found out, the same term of exile should have to be undergone once again, and then only the kingdom was to be restored to the exiled. This last game Yudhishthira lost also, and the five Pandava brothers retired to the forests with Draupadi, as homeless exiles They lived in the forests and mountains for twelve years There they performed many deeds of virtue and valour, and would go out now and then on a long round of pilgrimages, visiting many holy places. That part of the poem is very interesting and instructive, and various are the incidents, tales and legends with which this part of the book is replete. There are in it beautiful and sublime stories of ancient India, religious and philosophical Great sages came to see the brothers in their exile, and narrated to them many telling stories of ancient India, so as to make them bear lightly the burden of their exile.

* * *

Now, as the thirteenth year of the exile was drawing nigh, a Yaksha bade them go to Virata's kingdom and live there in such disguises as they would think best.

So, after the term of the twelve years' exile had expired, they went to the kingdom of Virata in different disguises to spend the remaining one year in concealment, and, entered into menial service in the king's household. Thus Yudhishthira became a Brahmana courtier of the

king, as one skilled in dice; Bhima was appointed a cook; Arjuna, dressed as a eunuch, was made a teacher of dancing and music to Uttara, the princess, and remained in the inner apartments of the king, Nakula became the keeper of the king's horses; and Sahadeva got the charge of the cows; and Draupadi, disguised as a waiting-woman, was also admitted into the queen's household Thus concealing their identity the Pandava brothers safely spent a year, and the search of Duryodhana to find them out was of no avail. They were only discovered just when the year was out

Then Yudhishthira sent an ambassador to Dhritarashtra and demanded that half of the kingdom should, as their share, be restored to them But Duryodhana hated his cousins and would not consent to their legitimate demands. They were even willing to accept a single province, nay, even five villages But the headstrong Duryodhana declared that he would not yield without fight even as much land as a needle's point would hold. Dhritarashtra pleaded again and again for peace, but all in vain. Krishna also went and tried to avert the impending war and death of kinsmen, so did the wise elders of the royal court, but all negotiations for a peaceful partition of the kingdom were futile So, at last preparations were made on both sides for war, and all the warlike nations took part in it.

The old Indian customs of the Kshatriyas were observed in it. Duryodhana took one side, Yudhishthira, the other. From Yudhishthira messengers were at once sent to all the surrounding kings, entreating their alliance, since honourable men would grant the request that first reached them. So, warriors from all parts assembled to espouse the cause of either the Pandavas or the Kurus according to the precedence of their requests; and thus one

brother joined this side, and the other that side, the father on one side, and the son on the other. The most curious thing was the code of war of those days; as soon as the battle for the day ceased and evening came, the opposing parties were good friends, even going to each other's tents; however when the morning came, again they proceeded to fight each other That was the strange trait that the Hindus carried down to the time of the Mohammedan invasion. Then again, a man on horseback must not strike one on foot; must not poison the weapon; must not vanquish the enemy in any unequal fight, or by dishonesty, and must never take undue advantage of another, and so on. If any deviated from these rules he would be covered with dishonour and shunned. The Kshatriyas were trained in that way. And when the foreign invasion came from Central Asia, the Hindus treated the invaders in the self-same way. They defeated them several times, and on as many occasions sent them back to their homes with presents, etc. The code laid down was that they must not usurp anybody's country; and when a man was beaten, he must be sent back to his country with due regard to his position. The Mohammedan conquerors treated the Hindu kings differently, and when they got them once, they destroyed them without remorse.

Mind you, in those days—in the times of our story, the poem says—the science of arms was not the mere use of bows and arrows at all, it was magic archery in which the use of *mantras*, concentration, etc., played a prominent part. One man could fight millions of men and burn them at will. He could send one arrow and it would rain thousands of arrows and thunder; he could make anything burn, and so on—it was all divine magic.

So in those old days, they used to fight with magic arrows. One man would be able to fight millions of others.

They had military arrangements and tactics: there were the foot soldiers, termed the *Pada;* then the cavalry, *Turaga;* and two other divisions which the moderns have lost and given up—there was the elephant corps,—hundreds and hundreds of elephants, with men on their backs, formed into regiments and protected with huge sheets of iron mail, and these elephants would bear down upon a mass of the enemy—then, there were the chariots, of course (you have all seen pictures of those old chariots, they were used in every country.) These were the four divisions of the army in those old days.

Now, both parties alike wished to secure the alliance of Krishna. But he declined to take an active part and fight in this war, but offered himself as charioteer to Arjuna, and as the friend and counsellor of the Pandavas, while to Duryodhana he gave his army of mighty soldiers.

Then was fought on the vast plain of Kurukshetra the great battle in which Bhishma, Drona, Karna, and the brothers of Duryodhana, with the kinsmen on both sides and thousands of other heroes, fell. The war lasted eighteen days. Indeed, out of the eighteen *Akshauhinis* of soldiers very few men were left. The death of Duryodhana ended the war in favour of the Pandavas. It was followed by the lament of Gandhari, the queen, and the widowed women, and the funerals of the deceased warriors.

The greatest incident of the war was the marvellous and immortal poem of the *Gita*, the *Song Celestial.* It is the popular Scripture of India and the loftiest of all teachings. It consists of a dialogue held by Arjuna with Krishna, just before the commencement of the fight on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. I would advise those of you who have not read that book to read it. If you only knew how much it has influenced your own country even! If you want to know the source of Emerson's inspiration, it

is this book, the *Gita*. He went to see Carlyle, and Carlyle made him a present of the *Gita*, and that little book is responsible for the Concord Movement. All the broad movements in America, in one way or other, are indebted to the Concord party.

The central figure of the *Gita* is Krishna. As you (Christians) worship Jesus of Nazareth as God come down as man, so, the Hindus worship many Incarnations of God. They believe in not one or two only, but in many, who have come down from time to time, according to the needs of the world, for the preservation of Dharma and destruction of wickedness Each sect has one, and Krishna is one of them. Krishna, perhaps, has a larger number of followers in India than any other Incarnation of God. His followers hold that he was the most perfect of those Incarnations. Why? "Because," they say, "look at Buddha and other Incarnations; they were only monks, and they had no sympathy for married people How could they have? But look at Krishna: he was great as a son, as a king, as a father, and all through his life he practised the marvellous teachings which he preached." "He who in the midst of the greatest activity finds the sweetest peace, and in the midst of the greatest calmness is most active, he has known the secret of life " Krishna shows the way how to do this—by being non-attached: do everything but do not get identified with anything. You are the Soul, the pure, the free, all the time; you are the Witness. Our misery comes, not from work, but by our getting attached to something. Take for instance, money: money is a great thing to have, earn it, says Krishna, struggle hard to get money, but don't get attached to it. So with children, with wife, husband, relatives, fame, everything; you have no need to shun them, only don't get attached. There is only one attachment and that belongs to the Lord, and to none other.

Work for them, love them, do good to them, sacrifice a hundred lives, if need be, for them, but never be attached. His own life was the exact exemplification of that.

After the conclusion of the Kurukshetra War, the great warrior and venerable grandsire, Bhishma, who fought ten days out of the eighteen days' battle, still lay on his death-bed and gave instructions to Yudhishthira on various subjects, such as the duties of the king, the duties of the four castes, the four stages of life, the laws of marriage, the bestowing of gifts, etc, basing them on the teachings of the ancient sages. He explained Sankhya philosophy and Yoga philosophy, and narrated numerous tales and traditions about saints and gods and kings. These teachings occupy nearly one-fourth of the entire work and form an invaluable storehouse of Hindu laws and moral codes. Yudhishthira had in the meantime been crowned king. But the awful bloodshed and extinction of superiors and relatives weighed heavily on his mind; and then, under the advice of Vyasa, he performed the Ashvamedha Sacrifice.

After the war, for fifteen years Dhritarashtra dwelt in peace and honour, obeyed by Yudhishthira and his brothers. Then the aged monarch leaving Yudhishthira on the throne, retired to the forest with his devoted wife and Kunti, the mother of the Pandava brothers, to pass his last days in asceticism.

Thirty-six years had now passed since Yudhishthira regained his empire. Then came to him the news that Krishna had left his mortal body Krishna, the sage, his friend, his prophet, his counsellor, had departed. Arjuna hastened to Dwaraka and came back only to confirm the sad news that Krishna and the Yadavas were all dead. Then the king and the other brothers, overcome with sorrow, declared that the time for them to go, too, had arrived.

So they cast off the burden of royalty, placed Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, on the throne, and retired to the Himalayas, on the Great Journey, the Mahaprasthana. This was a custom for old kings to become Sannyasins. In ancient India, when men became very old, they would give up everything. So did the kings. When a man did not want to live any more, then he went towards the Himalayas, without eating or drinking, and walked on and on till the body failed. All the time thinking of God, he just marched on till the body gave way

Then came the gods, the sages, and they told the king Yudhishthira, that he should go and reach heaven. To go to heaven one has to cross the highest peaks of the Himalayas. Beyond the Himalayas is Mount Meru. On the top of Mount Meru is heaven None ever went there in this body. There the gods reside And Yudhishthira was called upon by the gods to go there

So, the five brothers and their wife clad themselves in robes of bark, and set out on their journey. On the way, they were followed by a dog On and on they went, and they turned their weary feet northward to where the Himalaya lifts his lofty peaks, and they saw the mighty Mount Meru in front of them Silently they walked on in the snow, until suddenly the queen fell, to rise no more. To Yudhishthira who was leading the way, Bhima, one of the brothers, said: "Behold, O King, the queen has fallen." The king shed tears, but he did not look back. "We are going to meet Krishna," he says "No time to look back. March on." After a while, again Bhima said: "Behold, our brother Sahadeva has fallen." The king shed tears, but paused not. "March on", he cried.

One after the other, in the cold and snow, all the four brothers dropped down, but unshaken, though alone, the king advanced onward. Looking behind, he saw the

faithful dog was still following him. And so the king and the dog went on, through snow and ice, over hill and dale, climbing higher and higher, till they reached Mount Meru, and there they began to hear the chimes of heaven, and celestial flowers were showered upon the virtuous king by the gods Then descended the chariot of the gods, and Indra prayed him: "Ascend in this chariot, greatest of mortals: thou that alone art given to enter heaven without changing the mortal body." But no, that Yudhishthira would not do without his devoted brothers and his queen; then Indra explained to him that the brothers had already gone thither before him.

And Yudhishthira looked around and said to his dog: "Get into the chariot, child" The god stood aghast. "What! the dog?" he cried "Do thou cast off this dog! The dog goeth not to heaven! Great King, what dost thou mean? Art thou mad? Thou, the most virtuous of the human race, thou only canst go to heaven in thy body." "But he has been my devoted companion through snow and ice. When all my brothers were dead, my queen dead, he alone never left me. How can I leave him now?" "There is no place in heaven for men with dogs He has to be left behind . There is nothing unrighteous in this." "I do not go to heaven," replied the king, "without the dog. I shall never give up such a one who has taken refuge with me, until my own life is at an end. I shall never swerve from righteousness, nay, not even for the joys of heaven or the urging of a god." "Then," said Indra, "on one condition the dog goes to heaven. You have been the most virtuous of mortals and he has been a dog, killing and eating animals; he is sinful, hunting and taking other lives. You can exchange heaven with him." "Agreed," says the king. "Let the dog go to heaven "

At once, the scene changed Hearing these noble

words of Yudhishthira, the dog revealed himself as Dharma; the dog was no other than Yama, the Lord of Death and Justice. And Dharma exclaimed: "Behold, O King, no man was ever so unselfish as thou, willing to exchange heaven with a little dog, and for his sake disclaiming all his virtues, and ready to go to hell even for him Thou art well born, O King of kings. Thou hast compassion for all creatures, O Bharata, of which this is a bright example. Hence, regions of undying felicity are thine! Thou hast won them, O King, and thine is a celestial and high goal "

Then Yudhishthira, with Indra, Dharma and other gods, proceeds to heaven in celestial car He undergoes some trials, bathes in the celestial Ganges, and assumes a celestial body He meets his brothers who are now immortals, and all at last in bliss

Thus ends the story of the *Mahabharata*, setting forth in a sublime poem the triumph of virtue and defeat of vice.

In speaking of the *Mahabharata* to you, it is simply impossible for me to present the unending array of the grand and majestic characters of the mighty heroes depicted by the genius and mastermind of Vyasa The internal conflicts between righteousness and filial affection in the mind of the god-fearing, yet feeble, old, blind king Dhritarashtra, the majestic character of the grandsire Bhishma; the noble and virtuous nature of the royal Yudhishthira, and of the other four brothers, as mighty in valour as in devotion and loyalty, the peerless character of Krishna, unsurpassed in human wisdom; and not less brilliant, the characters of the women—the stately queen Gandhari, the loving mother Kunti, the ever-devoted and all-suffering Draupadi—these and hundreds of other characters of this Epic and those of the *Ramayana*, have

been the cherished heritage of the whole Hindu world for the last several thousands of years and form the basis of their thoughts and of their moral and ethical ideas. In fact, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization, which humanity has yet to aspire after.

VI

THE PURANAS

(1) THE BHAGAVATA

THE *Bhagavata Purana* is one among the eighteen principal Puranas. It is a most popular work and is regarded by the Hindus with the utmost reverence. It occupies the same pedestal as the *Ramayana* and is considered so sacred that it is read and recited daily in many orthodox Hindu homes as a holy text. It is replete with sublime lessons of philosophy and devotion, and its study is regarded as a blessing or benediction.

The age and the authorship of the Puranas is still a subject of debate. According to orthodox tradition, they were all composed by the great Vedavyasa, the author of the *Mahabharata;* and the traditional date would be some centuries before Christ. This view is not however accepted by our historians and research scholars. According to them, it is difficult to believe that all of them came into existence at such an early date or simultaneously and that they were the productions of one and the same author. All the Puranas have got the *panchalakshanas* or the five principal characteristics or topics--cosmogony, secondary creation, genealogy of gods and patriarchs, the reigns of the several Manus, and the histories of the solar and lunar dynasties. But their style varies greatly; while it is easy and flows freely in some, in the others, it is difficult, stilted and abstruse. The subjects dealt with

are widely different and sometimes conflicting While one deity is extolled in one, another is praised in a different Purana, even to the detriment of the first There are variations too in the Puranas as regards the *pancha-lakshanas* Scholars trained in historical research incline, for such reasons, to the belief that the Puranas are the works of different authors and that later writers probably assumed the name of Vyasa to give their works the same prestige and sanctity as is attached to the productions of the great Vedavyasa

It is difficult to specify with any degree of accuracy the date of the *Bhagavata Purana* or its authorship One South Indian writer of eminence takes the view that it is a work of the 7th or 8th century A D A theory has been advanced that one Boppa Deva was the author Of course, stout opposition is offered to these views by the older orthodox schools of thought

We are here concerned not so much with the age or authorship of the *Bhagavata* as with its intrinsic excellence as a work that expounds in ample measure and inimitable manner the *bhakti* cult It is the cult of one-pointed and steadfast and intensive devotion to the Lord which makes a man forgetful of himself and his duties and surroundings to such an extent that, at least temporarily, if not permanently, he identifies himself with the object of his adoration and loses his consciousness in a state of *samadhi* or trance; he meditates, sings and dances and in the sweet enjoyment of bliss, he becomes united with the Lord. It is this method of approach to God in all its phases and states that finds admirable treatment and exposition in the *Bhagavata Purana* Authorities are not wanting which proclaim that in this dark age of Kali the realisation of supreme bliss or *moksha* is verily through the path of *bhakti* *Bhajan* and *sankirtana*,

nama-japa or devotional recital of the Lord's names, are the main steps to such realisation.

It is common knowledge that *bhakti* means devotion to God. Usually, it is directed to a personal God with attributes—*Ishta Devata* But its chief characteristics, manifestations and results have been the subject of many special treatises in Hindu religion The subject of *bhakti* has been dealt with from several standpoints in various *smritis* and it is given the status almost of a *shastra*. In the *Narada-bhakti-sutras*, refererce is made specifically to thirteen Bhakti-Acharyas—namely Kumara, Vyasa, Shuka, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesha, Uddhava, Aruni, Bali, Hanuman and Vibhishana. Kumara is Sanatkumara Of course, we know Vyasa and Shuka. Shandilya is an ancient sage who has his own text-book on *bhakti*. Garga is probably the *rishi* who initiated Krishna and Balarama into the *upanayanam* ceremony. Aruni is mentioned in the Upanishads and Uddhava is referred to in the *Bhagavata*. Bali, Hanuman and Vibhishana are household names. Of these, we have got the writings only of Narada and Shandilya ; and it is not known whether the others were responsible for any books of aphorisms on *bhakti*.

The most well-known work on the subject of *bhakti* is the *Narada-sutras*. These *sutras* are only eighty-two in number but they cover a wide ground, when each aphorism, which is a highly distilled statement, is expanded so as to reveal its full implication and meaning. The means to be adopted for the culture of devotion, and the obstacles to be overcome, receive comprehensive attention at the hands of the sage who was a devotee *par excellence*. If Narada was responsible for the *Bhagavata* in the sense that it was at his instance that Vyasa composed it for attaining perfect equanimity of mind, it follows that the

Narada-bhakti-sutras are anterior in date to the *Bhagavata.* This however does not mean that Narada was the first founder of the school of *bhakti* or that the philosophy of devotion originated with his *sutras* It is possible to regard the prayers offered to some of the Vedic Gods as manifestations of *bhakti* and to postulate on this basis that the *bhakti* cult is as old as the Vedas But we should not mistake specific instances of devotion for the enunciation of a philosophy of *bhakti* as we find in the *Bhakti-sutras*, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and the *Bhagavata* Every hymn in praise of God is an act of devotion but we are here dealing not so much with stray outpourings of the heart but with a system which gave to *bhakti* a rational treatment and recognised the path as one of the primary means to salvation

Narada defines *bhakti* as परमप्रेमरूपा (supreme love of God) and अमृतस्वरूपा (immortal bliss) *Bhakti* is अनिर्वचनीया (indescribable) In *bhakti*, there is a complete dedication of all activities to Him तदर्पिताखिलाचारता and extreme mental affliction if He is forgotten तद्विस्मरणे परमव्याकुलता। Sri Shankara in his *Viveka Chudamani* refers to it as the relentless search of one's own nature and the truth of one's self In his *Shivananda Lahari*, we find the following well-known verse stating what *bhakti* is and means:

अकोलं निजबीजसततिरयस्कान्तोपल सूचिका
साध्वी नैजविभु लता क्षितिरुह सिन्धु सरिद्वल्लभम्।
प्राप्नोतीह यथा तथा पशुपते पादारविन्दद्वय
चेतोवृत्तिरुपेत्य तिष्ठति सदा सा भक्तिरित्युच्यते॥

Just as the ankola seed is attracted to the stem, the needle to the magnet, the virtuous wife to her lord, the creeper to the tree, the river to the ocean, if the mind is drawn towards Shiva's holy feet and dwells there, that is called *bhakti.*

The illustrations referred to by him to explain the nature of *bhakti* render it easy for the common man to understand or appreciate that it is a natural longing for the Lord and a passionate desire to become one with Him.

Bhakti is of nine different kinds as can be gathered from the oft-quoted words found in the *Bhagavata*:

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम्।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम्॥

Outstanding examples of persons who followed these nine aspects of *bhakti* in the respective order are Parikshit, Shuka, Prahlada, Lakshmi Prithu Akrura, Hanuman, Arjuna and Bali

The several varieties of *bhakti* are manifestations of supreme love for the Lord It is this supreme love which is the central theme of the *Bhagavata* and which has given the work unique eminence in the *bhakti* cult When service to the Lord and submission or surrender to Him is born out of selfless and transcendent love, it is *bhakti*. What the different stages in the development of *bhakti* are, how it transforms the devotee and ultimately enables him to merge in the Lord so that his state can be described as one of eternal bliss, can be gathered from a study of the *Bhagavata*. It is for this reason that the *Bhagavata* commands the deepest reverence and homage from all worshippers. The work is from one standpoint the efflorescence of *bhakti*; it is its finest flower From another standpoint, it is, so to say, the seed out of which a mighty tree of mysticism has grown, giving comfort to the afflicted and illumination to the seekers after truth.

The expounders of the *bhakti* cult are countless in number. The catholicity of the cult and the absence of the need for dry and burdensome learning have endeared it to every devout follower of religion For a true devotee

of God, there is nothing like caste, creed, sex, sect or religion:

न जातिभेदं न कुलं न लिङ्गं न गुणक्रिया: ।
न देशकालौ नावस्थां योगोह्ययमपेक्षते ॥

One who sees the Lord in everything loses the pride of caste or colour (जात्यभिमानविहीन:). Absolute forgetfulness of self and one's own surroundings in the intensity of devotion is the consequence of such *bhakti* and there is nothing further or beyond to reach.

The Hindu religion recognises three primary *margas* or paths for the quest of Truth or the Absolute There is however no antagonism between them; in fact, they are complementary or supplementary and this essential point has been reiterated times without number in our authoritative text-books on religion and philosophy; and their modes of reconciliation have been indicated and lengthily discussed. It is not difficult to perceive that disinterested action sublimated by unalloyed and single-minded devotion to God leads to illumination of the mind and the ultimate realisation of truth. While sufficient importance has been accorded to the three paths, votaries of one or the other have exhibited their own partiality for their choice. Some have said that the performance of duties enjoined in the shastras without attachment to the results of the action is a source of liberation. Others like Sri Shankara have maintained that constant discrimination between the real and the unreal and the relentless search for the real are the only way to *moksha*. A third group takes the view that *bhakti* is the safe and easy road to the enjoyment of bliss. A careful reading of the Hindu scriptures will convince us that whatever might be the emphasis by a particular school of thought on one of the three means, a sensible combination of conduct founded

on the three views and fittingly harmonised is the surest way of success.

The *bhakti* books in our religious literature are many but the *Bhagavata* occupies the foremost place among them as a magnificent epitome of the philosophy of devotion. Though there are many other works which excel it in literary composition and art or in a reasoned or rational treatment of the subject, it has not been surpassed, and has scarcely been equalled, in its grand presentation and portrayal of *bhakti* as the easiest road to Realisation The *Bhagavad-Gita* has its doctrine of *prapatti* or absolute surrender embodied in the famous verse:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।
अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

"Lay down all duties, in me take refuge, fear no longer for I will save you from sin and bondage."

It no doubt extols *bhakti* even over *karma* and *jnana* but it is a dry statement compared with the exuberance and fancy with which the *bhakti* theme has been dealt with in the *Bhagavata* in soul-inspiring words. The madness of divine love or God-intoxication with all its attendant outward and inward manifestations has received in the *Bhagavata* a lucidity and charm of exposition not found elsewhere Whoever was the author of the *Bhagavata*, it is a unique production not only of a master artist but of one who was bathed in *para-bhakti* and was immersed in its blissful waters. It is indeed difficult to portray the ecstasy of love, but in the *Bhagavata* we find a picture of the highest workmanship. The catholicity of *bhakti* which elevates the poorest, the most backward and the forlorn to the status of the great ones of the world, and the subtle way in which this transformation takes place, by the grace

of God either flowing directly, or indirectly through a Mahatma or a great soul, is an entrancing subject of study. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa said that while most men were mad after wealth, women and power, a few might be excused for being mad after God. It is this God-madness that is beautifully described in the Dashamaskandha or the 10th chapter of the *Bhagavata* giving an account of the life of Sri Krishna and His great *lila* or sports. Persons experiencing this madness dedicate their minds and bodies and actions to God and are bereft of all other desires. They repeat the holy names of the Lord and dwell in Him, they indulge in no other activities. Hear this verse from the *Mukunda mala*.

जिह्वे कीर्तय केशव मुररिपु चेतो भज श्रीधर
पाणिद्वन्द्व समर्चयाऽच्युतकथा श्रोत्रद्वय त्व शृणु ।
कृष्णं लोकय लोचनद्वय हरेर्गच्छाङ्घ्रियुग्मालय
जिघ्र घ्राण मुकुन्दपादतुलसी मूर्द्धन्नमाधोक्षजम् ॥

"Sing the praises of Keshava, the enemy of Mura, let your mind dwell on Shridhara, worship him with your hands; listen to his stories with your ears, see the Lord's beauty with your eyes, prostrate before him; smell the holy tulasi on his feet; bend your head in reverence to him."

The *Bhagavata* describes the condition of the Gopis in these words:

तन्मनस्कास्तदालापाः तद्विचेष्टास्तदात्मिका.
तद्गुणानेव गायन्त्यो नात्मागाराणि सस्मरुः ॥

"With their hearts in Him, speaking of Him alone, imitating His activities, praising His virtues, and completely identified with Him, they remembered not their homes."

In their frenzy, the *bhaktas* think of God, as their parent, friend, disciple, guru, lover, the beloved, and what not! All the human relations and relationships which we

find existing in the world around us are in divine love directed towards God and He becomes the object of affection, worship and adoration. *Ekantika bhakti* or one-pointed devotion transforms human nature completely. Such devotees converse with one another only about God, with their throats choked with emotion, eyes shedding tears of joy and hairs standing on end. They purify wherever they go or whatever they touch, they have no distinctions of caste, form, family or learning; they are in the Lord and merged with Him.

The *Bhagavata Purana* is mistakenly regarded by some unenlightened men and women as a profane work as it deals with the love-sports of Krishna with the Gopis and extols eroticism and carnal pleasures. On the other hand, the pure-minded think just the contrary. Swami Vivekananda has something to say on the subject. He burst out in these eloquent words:

> "There are not wanting fools, even in the midst of us, who cannot understand the marvellous significance of that most marvellous of all episodes. There are, let me repeat, impure fools, even born of our blood who try to shrink from that as if from something impure. To them I have only one thing to say, 'First make yourselves pure'; and you must remember that he who tells the history of the love of the Gopis is one who was born pure, the eternally pure Shuka, the son of Vyasa. So long as there is selfishness in the heart, so long is love of God impossible..... Aye, forget first the love for gold, and name, and fame, and for this little trumpery world of ours. Then, only then, you will understand the love of the Gopis, too holy to be attempted without giving up everything, too sacred to be understood until the soul has become perfectly pure. People with ideas of sex, and of money,

and of fame bubbling up every minute in the heart, daring to criticize and understand the love of the Gopis! This is the very essence of the Krishna incarnation."

It must be remembered that the account of the *rasalila* given in the *Bhagavata* was when Krishna was quite a young lad of eight yet within his teens, and many Gop s who took part were children and very old women. This by itself is enough to show that sensual pleasures and carnal satisfaction were not the objectives. In supreme love, typified by the union of man and woman in creative endeavour, there is nothing which is improper or scornful. In such love, there is unreserved and absolute surrender of body and soul and it is this aspect of *para-bhakti* that the *rasalila* of Lord Krishna was intended to illustrate. When he was a little boy, he took away their clothes and insisted on their appearing before him in utter nudity; the underlying idea was nothing sexual or erotic; the idea was to point out that reservations, mental or physical, detracted from the highest and most comprehensive dedication With their thoughts constantly in, and permanently fastened on, their beloved darling Krishna, the Gopis forgot everything else and even themselves. The Gopis of Vraja are specifically mentioned by Narada as examples of *para-bhakti.* The *Bhagavata* describes in great detail the sayings and doings of the Gopis seized with ecstatic devotion for Krishna, their Lord. Their spiritual exaltation knew no limits or bounds. They lost themselves in Him; their madness to be one with the Lord was acute. The most absolute dedication of mind and body, thought and action was their privilege and their joy. The sole object of their love was God Krishna to whom they consecrated all their desires and actions without any selfishness or motive. The rapture and rhapsody of their

love are described in the *Bhagavata* in words of exquisite beauty and emotion. Who would not crave for the Lord's grace to be blessed with such transcendent love and exuberance of ecstatic joy?

Naturally, the *Bhagavata* became a potent instrument for the spread of the cult of *bhakti* all over India and to every nook and corner. It influenced the life, literature and religion of the common man tremendously. The Alvars and the Nayanmars of the South, North Indian mystics like Ramananda, Kabir and Dadu, the Maharashtra saints like Jnaneshvar, Tukaram, Ramdas, the Pandharpur devotees, the famous Mira Bai of royal blood, and last but not least Chaitanya and his followers in Bengal, are all the products of this cult, which may be called the culture of devotion. They were not merely stray offshoots. They became in their turn also propagandists, exemplars and founders. The songs of Surdas and the *shlokas* of Lilashuka in his *Krishna Karnamrita* are soul-stirring and entrancing. The *Gita-Govinda* of Jayadeva is an exquisite lyric set to music, depicting the sublime love of Radha and Krishna--the ideal devotee and the supreme Godhead.

The *Bhagavata* philosophy of sweetness and joy in which God is approached through the heart and not so much by the intellect, has made the dry bones of religion in India instinct with life and its followers are shining examples of God-permeated men, living perhaps in comparative poverty or obscurity, seemingly mad or idiotic, but shedding divine light and benevolence.

(ii) PURANAS: THEIR CONTENT

THE Puranas occupy a unique position in the sacred and secular literature of the Hindus. They are regarded as

next in importance only to the Vedas, and are said to be like the *Mahabharata,* the fifth Veda, the Veda of laity, as old and as sacred as the Vedas. They are, however, closely akin to the Epics and the Smritis both in form and substance. "Taken collectively, they may be described as a popular encyclopaedia of ancient and medieval Hinduism, religious, philosophical, historical, personal, social and political."

Purana : Meaning and Characteristics: Etymologically the term "Purana" means "that which lives from ancient times" (*Vayu*). *Matsya* describes the Puranas as "containing the records of past events". Originally, therefore, the term signified "ancient tale" or "old narrative" in the Brahmana literature, as compared with Itihasa and Narashamsi, later it became associated with a class of literature Though in times of antiquity there was no Purana literature, Puranas in the form of legendary lore existed even prior to the revelation of the Vedas.

References in the *Atharva-Veda* imply that the Purana had assumed some independent form of composition, but it is not clear whether at that time Puranas meant actual books. The *Chhandogya-Upanishad,* however, shows that a definite work was intended by the term, but it is only in the Sutras that we find reference to the existence of real Puranas. Both Itihasa and Purana denoted history and both are mentioned together in Vedic literature, sometimes as separate and sometimes as compound words, but almost always associated with Gathas, Narashamsis, Vakovakyas etc , which were all subjects of study in those days. In the later Vedic Age, Itihasa preponderated over Purana, but gradually the latter asserted itself.

The characteristics of the Puranas have been men-

tioned by Amarsimha in his classical definition of the term in the 5th century A.D., which is also found in some Puranas. Amara defines Purana as having five characteristics or *Panchalakshana,* which are *sarga* (creation), *pratisarga* (dissolution and recreation), *vamsha* (divine genealogies), *manvantara* (ages of Manus) and *vamsha'nucharita* (genealogies of kings). A variant has world geography in place of genealogies of kings.

None of the existing Puranas is in complete agreement with this definition, some contain much more than these, while others scarcely touch these and deal with other topics. Moreover, *Panchalakshana* occupies but an insignificant part (about 1/40) of the extant Puranas. Thus it appears that religious instruction was not one of their primary aims, nor were they originally composed for sectarian purposes. These and other later additions such as description of gifts, religious observances, sacred places etc., which now form the bulk of the Puranas render the *Panchalakshana* definition merely theoretical The Puranas got over this difficulty by stating that the *Panchalakshana* definition applied only to the Upa-Purana (minor Purana), and that the Maha-Purana (major Purana) should have ten characteristics or *Dashalakshana,* which includes the following additional topics: *vritti* (means of livelihood), *raksha* (incarnation of gods), *mukti* (final emancipation), *hetu* (*jiva,* unmanifest), and *apashraya* (Brahman).

These characteristics, however, leave out of account several features of the Puranas, such as glorification of Brahma, Vishnu, Surya and Rudra, dissolution and preservation of the world, Dharma (righteous conduct), Artha (economics and polity), Kama (erotics) and Moksha (emancipation) Even this comprehensive definition of the *Matsya* does not cover the entire ground traversed by the Puranas. The Purana tradition, like that of *Mahabharata*,

has all along been floating and dynamic, and the texts have been subjected to numerous revisions, additions, omissions and modifications. Antiquity is the only characteristic of a Purana. "Anything old may be the subject of a Purana", observes Haraprasad Shastri, "and it covers all the aspects of life".

Puranas: Number and Classification: There are said to be eighteen Maha-Puranas and the same number of Upa-Puranas. With a few exceptions, almost all Puranas give a uniform list of Maha-Puranas, mostly in the following order: *Brahma*, *Padma*, *Vishnu*, *Bhagavata*, *Naradiya*, *Markandeya*, *Agni*. *Bhavishya*, *Brahmavaivarta*, *Varaha*, *Linga*, *Skanda*, *Vamana*, *Kurma*, *Matsya*, *Garuda* and *Brahmanda*. Some Puranas read *Shiva* in place of *Vayu*, and *Devi-Bhagavata* instead of (Vaishnava) *Bhagavata*. I have, however, shown elsewhere, that *Shiva* is not a Maha-Purana; there is also no reason for increasing the traditional number of the Maha-Puranas by adding *Shiva*, *Vayu*, and *Harivamsha*, as attempted by Pargiter and Farquhar.

There is, however, no uniformity in the enumeration of the Upa-Puranas which are more sectarian in character, and of composite nature. Their historical value is very little, being composed much later. From a collation of different lists the following appear to be the eighteen Upa-Puranas: *Sanathkumara*, *Narasimha*, *Nanda*, *Shivadharma*, *Durvasa*, *Naradiya*, *Kapila*, *Vamana*, *Ushanas*, *Manava*, *Varuna*, *Kali*, *Maheshvara*, *Samba*, *Saura*, *Parashara*, *Maricha*, and *Bhargava*. R. C. Hazra has collected the names of about a hundred Upa-Puranas, of which hardly fifteen have appeared in print.

The Puranas can be classified into ancient and late according to their degree of conformity to the *Pancha-lakshana* definition. The less the number of additions to

the five characteristics mentioned in the *Amarakosha,* the older the Purana. Judging from this test, we may pronounce the *Vayu, Brahmanda, Matsya,* and *Vishnu* as the ancient Puranas.

The Maha-Puranas have further been sub-divided according to their preferential treatment of Shiva, Vishnu, Agni, Surya and Brahma. A more satisfactory grouping, however, has as its basis the critical examination of the contents of the Puranas yielding the following types: (1) Those which contain all the abstracts of all the great works in arts and sciences in Sanskrit, including the usual Puranic materials, such as *Garuda, Agni* and *Narada.* (2) Those which mainly deal with *tirthas* and *vratas* such as *Padma, Skanda* and *Bhavishya.* (3) Those which underwent two general revisions, such as *Brahma, Bhagavata,* and *Brahmavaivarta* (4) Historical Puranas, of which only one exists, namely *Brahmanda.* (5) Sectarian Puranas, such as *Linga, Vamana* and *Markandeya,* the first two being Shaiva Puranas, while the last deals with Devi. (6) Old Puranas revised out of existence, such as, *Varaha, Kurma,* and *Matsya*

Origin and Development : The Puranas contain different legendary and mythological accounts of their origin. Modern scholars also have expressed different views regarding the origin of the Puranas. But tracing the genesis and development of the legendary lore from the earliest times to the period when the Puranas attained the status of eighteen Maha-Puranas, it appears that up to the period of the *Atharva-Veda,* the Puranas signified only tales of yore, and were allied with Itihasa, Gatha, Narashamsis etc. It is doubtful whether the term then conveyed any class of Purana literature The Puranas in the Vedic Age were compiled by the Suta from the Vedic Vamsha, Akhyana etc. This Suta was a holy and venerable Brahmana, quite

distinct from the Suta of the Dharmashastra, who was the son of a Kshatriya father and Brahmana mother.

The Bharata war was an important landmark in the development of the Puranas, because their canon was fixed some four generations after the Bharata war and the genealogical accounts subsequent to this period were designed as "future" in the Puranas The next stage may be found in the Upanishadic period when chapters on cosmogony, which incorporate the Sankhya and Upanishadic ideas, were added in the Puranas along with those on the ages of the Manus The self-contradictory title *Bhavishyat-Purana* employed by Apastamba indicates that in the period of the Sutras the term Purana had become so specialised as to have lost its proper meaning and become merely a designation of a particular class of books. Puranas of those days probably gave rise to the *Panchalakshana* definition, and discussions of Hindu rites and customs, such as *varnashramadharma, shraddha, dana, diksha, vratas, tirthas* etc, which are strictly the domain of the Smritis and Dharmashastras, were incorporated in the Puranas not later than the middle of the 4th century A.D. Liberties have all along been taken with the text of the Puranas, and especially the ambition of the later compilers was to make the Purana all-comprehensive and encyclopaedic like the *Mahabharata* and every successive generation tried to make the Purana up to-date by various devices.

Contents of the Puranas Cosmogony: The Puranas contain various accounts of the creation of the world. According to one account, when the self-existent Brahman, who exists in three successively proceeding forms—Purusha, Pradhana and Kala—enters Purusha and Pradhana, *Mahat*, or *Buddhi* is produced from Pradhana. *Buddhi* produces *Ahankara* and

so are produced the five subtle elements (*tan-matras*), the gross elements (*bhutas*) and the eleven organs (*jnanendriyas, karmendriyas*, and *manas*). The highest deity invested with activity (*guna rajas*) known as Brahma creates all beings; the same deity with the purity (*sattva guna*), known as Vishnu, preserves the universe, and in the awful form Rudra with the darkness (*tamo guna*) destroys it.

This creation lasts for a day of Brahma which is equal to fourteen Manvantaras. At the close of each Manvantara, life of inferior creatures and lower worlds comes to an end, leaving the substance of the Universe entire, and gods and sages unharmed. After the end of the fourteenth Manvantara when Brahma's day closes, occurs the great dissolution called Naimittika-Pratisarga, in which all things come to an end by fire and water, from which only the Prakrita Creation escapes including the three qualities and Seven Rishis etc. At the end of Brahma's night lasting for a Kalpa, he awakes and begins his creation again. All the Prakrita Creation disappears only at the Prakrita Pralaya, occurring at the end of the life of Brahma, when not only all the gods and all other forms are annihilated, but the elements are again merged into primary substance, besides which only spiritual being exists.

The explanation of these theories involves a consideration of the question of Yugas, Manvantaras etc. A human year is a day and night of the gods; 12,000 divine years or 4,320,000 human years constitute Chaturyuga (four ages) or Mahayuga (great age) which is divided into four ages of progressive deterioration in the ratio of 4:3:2:1, respectively for Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. Each of these Yugas is preceded and followed by Sandhyas containing a tenth of the period of a Yuga. 1,000 Chaturyugas, that is 4,320,000,000 human years are equivalent to a day or night of Brahma, which is called

a Kalpa (aeon). Each Kalpa comprises the periods of fourteen Manus—fathers of mankind—each of whom presides over seventy-one Chaturyugas with a surplus.

This chronological system of fitting in seventy-one four-age periods making a Manvantara in the cosmological scheme is purely hypothetical and a later elaboration. The idea of four ages seems to be an early one. Various theories have been put forth by scholars for explaining the Yugas and Manvantaras, but no satisfactory explanation of the Manvantara-Chaturyuga theory has yet come forth. The division of time into four ages (Yugas), the Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali, according to Pargiter, had a historical basis though later speculations have elaborated it into an amazing yet precise scheme of cosmogony. This theory of the four ages applies only to India and not to the whole world, and thus the further elaboration of these ages in the seventy-one four-age periods making up a Manvantara is evidently a later development. Great wars, conquests or political changes may have marked the end of one age and the beginning of another. The Krita age appears to have ended with the destruction of the Haihayas and the Treta began with the reign of Sagara. Rama Dasharathi is said to have lived in the interval between the Treta and Dvapara age. The Bharata war has been taken as having occurred at the close of the Dvapara age, and the Kali age began after the war. These ages thus symbolize changes in the political conditions in India.

Taking an average of 18 years for each generation, it may be stated that the Krita age covered (40 x 18) 720 years, Treta (25 x 18) 450 years, and Dvapara (30 x 18) 540 years, or that the historical period in India begins about 1800 years before the Bharata war.

Cosmography: The account of the first Manu includes a description of the universe over which he ruled. Like chro-

nology, most of the description is imaginary. The world is said to consist of seven concentric continents separated by encircling seas of different substances such as butter, milk etc. The innermost of the seven continents separated from the next by salt-water is Jambudvipa, which alone was subject to the law of Chaturyugas. The most importtant region of Jambudvipa is Bharatavarsha or India, so called because the descendants of the Bharatas reside there. Bharatavarsha lies north of the ocean and south of the snowy mountains containing seven main chains of mountains named Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Suktimat, Riksha, Vindhya, and Paripatra. The Kiratas live on the east, the Yadavas on the west, and the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras in the centre of Bharatavarsha. Detailed lists have been given of the rivers flowing from the Himalayas and the seven mountain chains as also of several tribes inhabiting the various regions. The *Mahabharata* and other works also contain similar lists. The mention of Yavanas, Shakas and Pallavas, who came to India in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C., and of the Hunas, who broke up the Gupta empire in the 6th century A.D., indicates that the geographical lists were brought up-to-date from time to time.

Dynastic Lists : The Puranas begin their dynastic lists with Manu, the saviour of humanity from the Flood. Vaivasvata Manu, the first king, had ten sons, among whom was divided the whole country. Ninety-five generations ruled between the time of Manu and the Bharata War. After the Bharata War, the Puranas use the future tense for the subsequent dynasties. They are called "dynasties of the Kali age", mentioned only in seven Puranas, where their account is traced till about the period of the Guptas and the Andhras.

Theology : The theology preached is heterogeneous. In

preference to the Vedic deities of whom only Indra and Agni retain their premier positions, popular deities are praised in the Puranas. The three chief gods are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Varuna becomes the lord of the ocean, while his twin Mitra disappears. Sun is highly extolled in some Puranas, but details of his worship are given in the *Bhavishya*. Yama, the god of the dead, punishes the sinners in his hells. Gandharvas and Apsarases are celestial musicians and nymphs. Under demons are classed the Asuras. Daityas, Danavas, and Rakshasas

Of the Trinity, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. Sectarian Puranas preach the supremacy either of Vishnu or of Shiva, but generally, the older Puranas glorify also the rival deity. The high watermark of catholicity is found in the monotheistic teaching enunciating the unity of all three, and worship of any one of them according to the preference of the worshipper.

Incarnations : Ten incarnations of Vishnu appear in most of the Puranas, of which five (Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana) are mythological, four (Parashurama, Rama, Krishna and Buddha) are historical, while the last incarnation, Kalki, is yet to manifest. This Dashavatara or ten incarnation theory suggests the idea of evolutionary process of human development. The fish (*matsya*) emerges out of the early Palaeozoic seas, followed by the tortoise (*kurma*) and boar (*varaha*) in the Mesozoic period. Next comes the man-lion (*nara-simha*) and dwarf (*vamana*) in the period of cavemen and bushmen. Parashurama represents the nomadic or hunter stage, and Rama and Krishna the full city civilization.

In contrast to Vishnu, who dwells on the celestial plane except when incarnated, Shiva is a terrestrial god, forming part of the Indian pantheon since pre-historic

days. His consort is Parvati, the Mother Goddess, and their sons are Skanda and Ganesha. The Pashupata cult, praised in the Shaiva Puranas, is denounced in others. The *linga* cult associated with Shiva and the Shakta cult associated with its female counterpart appear only in later Puranas.

There is also the worship of Pitris (Manes), who are said to comprise seven groups, sometimes ranking with gods. These Pitris are connected with Shraddha (funeral oblations), about which elaborate particulars are given in the Puranas.

Among the heretical systems Jainism and Buddhism are condemned. Vishnu appearing as Mayamoha misguides the demons with the philosophies of ignorance and darkness, that is Jaina, Buddhist and Charvaka doctrines, the followers of which are included in the generic term *Nagna* (naked). Kapalikas figure as the worst heretics.

The Aims of Life : Most of the Puranas admit Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha as the four aims of life. Dharma includes religious teachings both Brahmanical and popular. Sin, punishment, penance and hell are described in some detail. The popular teaching consists of descriptions of *tirthas* (holy places) and of pilgrimages, as also of *vrata* (religious observances) and *dana* (gifts), etc.,—the chief feature of all these being that they were available to all, including women and Shudras, to whom the Vedas were denied.

Artha, acquisition of wealth or polity, is found in the Rajadharma section of many Puranas, dealing with the duties of kings and methods of administration, conduct of war and peace etc.

Kama includes marriage rules, and duties of wife and women, which are illustrated by stories such as those of

Sita and Savitri, who are cited as examples of perfect womanhood.

Moksha, or final emancipation, is the aim placed before every human being. Transmigration is an article of faith; one can attain deliverance from the chain of successive rebirths by following the path of Yoga and Bhakti. Yoga includes Jnanayoga and Karmayoga, while Bhakti is generally associated with Vishnu and Krishna.

Puranas and the so-called Kshatriya tradition: That the P. nas represent a Kshatriya tradition as distinct from the Brahamana tradition of the Vedas, is accepted by many scholars following Pargiter, who based his theory on two assumptions. (1) heroes of Puranas are Kshatriya kings most of whom are not mentioned in the Vedas, (2) Puranas were transmitted by the Sutas who were of Kshatriya origin. There is absolutely no foundation for these beliefs

The Suta, as already shown, was a venerable Brahmana. Kshatriya tradition and Brahmana tradition were at no time two water-tight compartments. Even in the works distinctly assigned to Kshatriya tradition by Pargiter we find glorification of the Brahmanas, and the so-called Brahmanic literature abounds in Kshatriya legends. The Puranas assign a comparatively small portion to genealogical accounts, the genuine Kshatriya tradition according to Pargiter, their main bulk deals with Vedic and Brahmanic lore, to which indeed the earliest reference to Purana is made. Moreover, the Puranas follow the Vedic religion and take pride in styling themselves as "fifth Veda". Again, even according to Pargiter, the Puranas as we have them now, are *undeniably* Brahmanic compilations; so no part can be partitioned as Brahmanic and Kshatriya traditions. These are not two distinct sets of

traditions; both are Brahmanical, produced under different environments with different aims and objects.

Comparative value of the Vedic texts and Puranas : The opinions of scholars differ regarding the comparative value of the historical data supplied by the Vedas and the Puranas. Priority of date and comparative freedom from textual corruption are doubtless two strong points in favour of Vedic texts. The Puranas, however, cannot be ruled out absolutely because despite a good deal of what is untrustworthy in them it is absurd to suppose that fiction completely ousted the truth.

As the Vedas and the Puranas were produced under different circumstances and with different aims and objects, there would naturally be some differences in the accounts recorded in them. It will be seen, however, that there is practically no contradiction or conflict in the Vedic texts and the Puranas. The *Rig-Veda* is a Kuru-Panchala product and naturally kings belonging to that country play prominent roles in it and others find but incidental mention. Kings mentioned in the Vedas but not in the Puranas possibly belonged to smaller dynasties, whose names were therefore not preserved in the Puranas. There is also the possibility of the same person being referred to under different names in the two sets of traditional accounts. Some of the kings mentioned in the *Rig-Veda* can be fitted in the gaps in the Puranic lists. The *Rig-Veda* no doubt offers the proper corrective to the Puranic lists; but, when we find Puranic accounts corroborated by the Vedic evidence, it is legitimate to take their testimony as valid in matters on which *Rig-Veda* is silent. The proper procedure for the writing of traditional history is to take into account the joint testimony of the Vedic and the Puranic texts wherever available and try to bring harmony into the conflicting texts. The evidence of the

Puranas in these matters needs very careful consideration.

Age of the Puranas : The age of the Puranas is a disputed question. Puranas as they exist cannot be assigned to any particular age; even the component parts of individual Puranas belong to different periods While dealing with the age of the Puranas, therefore, we should consider the date of the earliest portions and not the latest The earlier editions of the Puranas, no doubt, existed at the period of the Bharata war and that of Magasthenes. The extant Puranas, however, can be assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era on the testimony of epigraphy and literature.

Historical value of the Puranas and modern scholarship : Twelve Puranas contain dynastic lists, and seven continue it after the Bharata war Though reduced to writing at a comparatively late period, there is no doubt that the Puranas embody the earliest traditional history and that much of their material is old and valuable. Hence, there would be no justification for rejecting the evidence of the Puranas wholesale.

Modern scholarship varied its attitude towards the Puranas at different times At the beginning of the Indic studies in the last decades of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, the Puranas were regarded as of no historical value on account of the confused conglomeration of legendary and historical events in the Puranas as also for their peculiar ideas of "ages" The confirmation of the Puranic statement as to the source of Nile by actual discovery by Captain Speke in Nubia (Kushadvipa) turned the tide in favour of the Puranas But the study of inscriptions and coins which was inaugurated in India at about the same time, tended to minimise the value of the Puranas and in some respects contradicted the tradition and proved it to be wrong. The Buddhist texts also ran

counter to the accounts in the Puranas in some particulars All these tended to raise suspicion and disbelief about the Puranas.

In the early decades of the last century, Wilson made a systematic study of the Puranas and brought out an English translation of the *Vishnu Purana* with an exhaustive introduction and critical and comparative notes which attracted the attention of European scholars to this important branch of Sanskrit literature The Puranas, rescued from unmerited oblivion, came to be considered as worthy of credence when corroborated by independent evidence. It was not, however, till the early decades of the present century that the patient and the sustained researches of Pargiter placed before the world a critical survey of the historical material of the Puranas. Smith proved that the *Matsya* account of the Andhras is substantially correct. Scholars have found that the *Vishnu* version about the Mauryas and the *Vayu* about the early Guptas merit credence, and the Puranas now are regarded as worthy of more serious attention than they received hitherto. The present view is to accept the Puranas as one of the important sources of the traditional history of ancient India. Nowadays the Puranas are being critically studied in order to extract historical data therefrom, and modern historians have used the Puranic material in their works.

The importance of the Puranas for the comprehensive history of Indian culture and civilization is immense, as there are sections dealing with polity, sociology, administrative institutions, fine arts, architecture etc. The function of a modern historian should be to disentangle legendary, fictitious or mythological material from the purely historical or cultural data.

VII

SANSKRIT KAVYA

(1) VALMIKI, VYASA AND KALIDASA

VALMIKI, Vyasa and Kalidasa are the essence of the history of ancient India; if all else were lost they would still be its sole and sufficient cultural history. Their poems are types and exponents of three periods in the development of the human soul, types and exponents also of the three great powers which dispute and clash in the imperfect and half-formed temperament and harmonise in the formed and perfect. At the same time their works are pictures at once minute and grandiose of three moods of our Aryan civilization of which the first was predominatingly moral, the second predominatingly intellectual, the third predominatingly material. The fourth power of the soul, the spiritual, which can alone govern and harmonise the others by fusion with them, had not, though it pervaded and powerfully influenced each successive development, any separate age of predominance, did not like the others possess the whole race with a dominating obsession.

It is because, conjoining in themselves the highest and most varied poetical gifts, they at the same time represent and mirror their age and humanity by their interpretative largeness and power that our three chief poets hold their supreme place and bear comparison with the great world-names, Homer, Shakespeare and Dante.

It has been said, truly, that the *Ramayana* represents an ideal society and assumed, illogically, that it must therefore represent an altogether imaginary one. The argument ignores the alternative of a real society idealised. No poet could evolve entirely out of his own imagination a picture at once so colossal, so minute and so consistent in every detail. No number of poets could do it without stumbling into fatal incompatibilities either of fact or of view, such as we find defacing the *Mahabharata*. This is not the place to discuss the question of Valmiki's age and authorship. This much, however, may be said that after excluding the Uttarakanda, which is a later work, and some amount of interpolation, for the most part easy enough to detect, and reforming the text which is not unfrequently in a state of truly shocking confusion, the *Ramayana* remains on the face of it the work of a single mighty and embracing mind. It is not easy to say whether it preceded or followed in date Vyasa's epic; it is riper in form and tone, has some aspects of a more advanced and mellow culture, and yet it gives the general impression of a younger humanity and an earlier, less sophisticated and complex mind.

The nature of the poem and much of its subject matter might at least justify the conclusion that Valmiki wrote in a political and social atmosphere much resembling that which surrounded Vyasa. He lived, that is to say, in an age approaching the present disorder and turmoil, of great revolutions and unbridled aristocratic violence, when the governing chivalry, the Kshatriya caste, in its pride of strength was asserting its own code of morals as the one rule of conduct. We may note the plain assertion of this stand-point by Jarasandha in the *Mahabharata* and Valmiki's emphatic and repeated protest against it through the mouth of Rama. This ethical code

was like all aristocratic codes of conduct full of high chivalry and the spirit of *noblesse oblige,* but a little loose in sexual morality on the masculine side and indulgent to violence and the strong hand. To the pure and delicate moral temperament of Valmiki, imaginative, sensitive, enthusiastic, shot through with rays of visionary idealism and eternal light, this looseness and violence were shocking and abhorrent. He could sympathise with them, as he sympathised with all that was wild and evil and anarchic, with the imaginative and poetical side of his nature, because he was a universal creative mind driven by his art-sense to penetrate, feel and re-embody all that the world contained; but to his intellect and peculiar emotional temperament they were distasteful. He took refuge therefore in a past age of national greatness and virtue, distant enough to be idealised but near enough to have left sufficient materials for a great picture of civilization which would serve his purpose,—an age, it is important to note, of grandiose imperial equipoise, such as must have existed in some form at least since a persistent tradition of it runs through Sanskrit literature

In the framework of his imperial age, his puissant imagination created a marvellous picture of the human world as it might be if the actual and existing forms and materials of society were used to the best and purest advantage, and an equally marvellous picture of another non-human world in which aristocratic violence, strength, self-will, lust and pride ruled supreme and idealised or rather colossallised. He brought these two worlds into warlike collision by the hostile meeting of their champions and utmost evolutions of their peculiar character-types, Rama and Ravana, and so created the *Ramayana,* the grandest and most paradoxical poem in the world, which becomes unmatchably sublime by disdaining all con-

sistent pursuit of sublimity, supremely artistic by putting aside all the conventional limitations of art, magnificently dramatic by disregarding all dramatic illusion, and uniquely epic by handling the least as well as the most epic material. Not all perhaps can enter at once into the spirit of this masterpiece; but those who have once done so, will never admit any poem in the world as its superior.

My point here, however, is that it gives us the picture of an entirely moralised civilization, containing indeed vast material development and immense intellectual power, but both moralised and subordinated to the needs of purity of temperament and delicate ideality of action. Valmiki's mind seems nowhere to be familiarised with the high-strung intellectual gospel of a high and severe Dharma culminating in a passionless activity, raised to a supreme spiritual significance in the *Gita*, which is one great key-note of the *Mahabharata*. Had he known it, the strong leaven of sentimentalism and feminity in his nature might well have rejected it; such temperaments when they admire strength, admire it manifested and forceful rather than self-contained. Valmiki's characters act from emotional or imaginative enthusiasm, not from intellectual conviction; an enthusiasm of morality actuates Rama, an enthusiasm of immorality tyrannises over Ravana. Like all mainly moral temperaments, he instinctively insisted on one old established code of morals being universally observed as the only basis of ethical stability, avoided casuistic developments and distasted innovators in metaphysical thought as by their persistent and searching questions dangerous to the established bases of morality, especially to its wholesome ordinariness and everydayness. Valmiki, therefore, the father of our secular poetry, stands for that early and finely moral civilization which was the true heroic age of the Hindu spirit.

The poet of the *Mahabharata* lives nearer to the centre of an era of aristocratic turbulence and disorder. If there is any kernel of historic truth in the story of the poem, it records the establishment of those imperial forms of government and society which Valmiki had idealised. Behind its poetic legend it celebrates and approves the policy of a great Kshatriya leader of men who aimed at the subjection of his order to the rule of a central imperial power which should typify its best tendencies and control or expel its we[illegible]. But while Valmiki was a soul out of harmony with its surroundings and looking back to an ideal past, Vyasa was a man of his time, full of its tendencies, hopeful of its results and looking forward to an ideal future. The one might be described as a conservative idealist advocating return to a better but departed model, the other as a progressive realist looking forward to a better but unborn model. Vyasa accordingly does not revolt from the aristocratic code of morality; it harmonises with his own proud and strong spirit and he accepts it as a basis for conduct, but purified and transfigured by the illuminating idea of the *nishkama dharma*.

But above all intellectuality is his grand note; he is profoundly interested in ideas, in metaphysics, in ethical problems; he subjects morality to casuistic tests from which the more delicate moral tone of Valmiki's spirit shrank; he boldly erects above ordinary ethics a higher principle of conduct having its springs in intellect and strong character; he treats government and society from the standpoint of a practical and discerning statesmanlike mind, idealising solely for the sake of a standard. He touches in fact all subjects, and whatever he touches he makes fruitful and interesting by originality, penetration and a sane and bold vision. In all this he is the son of the civilization he has mirrored to us, a civilization in

which both morality and material development are powerfully intellectualised. Nothing is more remarkable in all the characters of the *Mahabharata* than this puissant intellectualism; every action of theirs seems to be impelled by an immense driving force of mind solidifying in character and therefore conceived and outlined as in stone. This orgiastic force of the intellect is at least as noticeable as the impulse of moral or immoral enthusiasm behind each great action of the *Ramayana*. Throughout the poem the victorious and manifold mental activity of an age is prominent and gives its character to its civilization. There is far more of thought in action than in the *Ramayana,* far less of thought in response, the one pictures a time of gigantic creative ferment and disturbance; the other, as far as humanity is concerned, an ideal age of equipoise, tranquillity and order.

Many centuries after these poets, perhaps a thousand years or even more, came the third great embodiment of the national consciousness, Kalidasa. There is a far greater difference between the civilization he mirrors than between Vyasa's and Valmiki's. He came when the daemonic orgy of character and intellect had worked itself out and ended in producing at once its culmination and reaction in Buddhism. There was everywhere noticeable a petrifying of the national temperament, visible to us in the tendency to codification; philosophy was being codified, morals were being codified, knowledge of any and every sort was being codified; it was on one side of its nature an age of scholars, legislators, dialecticians, philosophical formalisers. On the other side the creative and aesthetic enthusiasm of the nation was pouring itself into things material, into the life of the senses, into the pride of life and beauty. The arts of painting, architecture, song, dance, drama, gardening, jewellery, all that can

administer to the wants of great and luxurious capitals, received a grand impetus which brought them to their highest technical perfection. That this impetus came from Greek source or from the Buddhists seems hardly borne out: the latter may rather have shared in the general tendencies of the time than originated them, and the Greek theory gives us a maximum of conclusions with a minimum of facts. I do not think, indeed, it can be maintained that this period, call it classical or material or what one will, was marked off from its predecessor by any clear division: such a partition would be contrary to the law of human development. Almost all the concrete features of the age may be found as separate facts in ancient India: codes existed from old time; art and drama were of fairly ancient origin, to whatever date we may assign their development; physical yoga processes existed almost from the first, and the material development portrayed in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* is hardly less splendid than that of which the *Raghuvamsha* is so brilliant a picture. But whereas, before, these were subordinated to more lofty ideals, now they prevailed and became supreme, occupying the best energies of the race and stamping themselves on its life and consciousness In obedience to this impulse the centuries between the rise of Buddhism and the advent of Shankaracharya became, though not agnostic and sceptical, for they rejected violently the doctrines of Charvaka, yet profoundly scientific and outward-going even in their spiritualism. It was therefore the great age of formalised metaphysics, science, law, art and the sensuous luxury which accompanies the arts.

Nearer the beginning than the end of this period, when India was systematising her philosophies and developing her arts and science, turning from Upanishad to Purana, from the high rarefied peaks of early Vedanta

and Sankhya with their inspiring sublimities and bracing keenness to physical methods of ascetic yoga and the dry intellectualism of metaphysical logic or else to the warm sensuous humanism of emotional religion, before its full tendencies had asserted themselves, in some spheres before it had taken the steps its attitude portended, Kalidasa arose in Ujjayini and gathered up in himself its current tendencies while he foreshadowed many of its future developments. He himself must have been a man gifted with all the learning of his age, rich, aristocratic, moving wholly in high society, familiar with and fond of life in the most luxurious metropolis of his time, passionately attached to the arts, acquainted with the sciences, deep in law and learning, versed in the formalised philosophies. He has some notable resemblances to Shakespeare: among others his business was, like Shakespeare's to sum up the immediate past in terms of the present: at the same time he occasionally informed the present with hints of the future. Like Shakespeare also he seems not to have cared deeply for religion.

In creed he was a Vedantist and in ceremony perhaps a Shiva-worshipper, but he seems rather to have accepted these as the orthodox forms of his time and country, recommended to him by his intellectual preference and aesthetic affinities, than to have satisfied with them any profound religious want In morals also he accepted and glorified the set and scientifically elaborate ethics of the codes, but seems himself to have been destitute of the finer elements of morality. We need not accept any of the ribald and witty legends with which the Hindu decadence surrounded his name; but no unbiassed student of Kalidasa's poetry can claim for him either moral fervour or moral strictness. His writings show indeed a keen appreciation of high ideal and lofty thought, but the

appreciation is aesthetic in its nature: he elaborates and seeks to bring out the effectiveness of these on the imaginative sense of the noble and grandiose, applying to the things of the mind and soul the same aesthetic standard as to the things of sense themselves. He has also the natural high aristocratic feeling for all that is proud and great and vigorous, and so far as he has it, he has exaltation and sublimity, but aesthetic grace and beauty and symmetry sphere in the sublime and prevent it from standing out with the bareness and boldness which is the sublime's natural presentation. His poetry has, therefore, never been, like the poetry of Valmiki and Vyasa, a great dynamic force for moulding heroic character or noble or profound temperament. In all this he represented the highly vital and material civilization to which he belonged.

Yet some dynamic force a poet must have, some general human inspiration of which he is the supreme exponent; or else he cannot rank with the highest. Kalidasa is the great, the supreme poet of the senses, of aesthetic beauty, of sensuous emotion. His main achievement is to have taken every poetic element, all great poetical forms, and subdued them to a harmony of artistic perfection set in the key of sensuous beauty. In continuous gift of seizing an object and creating it to the eye he has no rival in literature. A strong visualising faculty such as the greatest poets have in their most inspired descriptive moments, was with Kalidasa an abiding and unfailing power, and the concrete presentation which this definiteness of vision demanded, suffused with an intimate and sovereign feeling for beauty of colour and beauty of form, constitutes the characteristic Kalidasian manner. He is besides a consummate artist, profound in conception and suave in execution, a master of sound and language who has moulded for himself out of the infinite possibilities of the Sanskrit tongue a verse

and diction which are absolutely the grandest, most puissant and most full-voiced of any human speech, a language of the Gods. The note struck by Kalidasa when he built Sanskrit into that palace of noble sound, is the note which meets us in almost all the best work of the classic literature. Its characteristic features of style are a compact but never abrupt brevity, a soft gravity and smooth majesty, a noble harmony of verse, a strong and lucid beauty of chiselled prose, above all an epic precision of phrase, weighty, sparing and yet full of colour and sweetness. Moreover it is admirably flexible, suiting itself to all forms from the epic to the lyric, but most triumphantly to the two greatest, the epic and the drama. In his epic style Kalidasa adds to these permanent features a more than Miltonic fullness and grandiose pitch of sound and expression, in his dramatic and extraordinary grace and suavity which makes it adaptable to conversation and the expression of dramatic shade and subtly blended emotion.

With these supreme gifts Kalidasa had the advantage of being born into an age with which he was in temperamental sympathy and a civilization which lent itself naturally to his peculiar descriptive genius. It was an aristocratic civilization, as indeed were those which had preceded it, but it far more nearly resembled the aristocratic civilizations of Europe by its material luxury, its aesthetic tastes, its polite culture, its keen worldly wisdom and its excessive appreciation of wit and learning. Religious and ethical thought and sentiment were cultivated such as in France under Louis XIV, more in piety and profession than as swaying the conduct; they pleased the intellect or else touched the sentiment, but did not govern the soul. It was bad taste to be irreligious, but it was not bad taste to be sensual or even in some respects im-

moral. The splendid and luxurious courts of this period supported the orthodox religion and morals out of convention, conservatism, the feeling for established order and the inherited tastes and prejudices of centuries, not because they fostered any deep religious or ethical sentiment. Yet they applauded high moral ideas if presented to them in cultured and sensuous poetry much in the same spirit that they applauded voluptuous description similarly presented. The ideals of morality were much lower than of old; free drinking was openly recognised and indulged in by both sexes; purity of life was less valued than in any other period of our civilization Yet the unconquerable monogamous instinct of the high class Hindu woman seems to have prevented promiscuous vice and the disorganisation of the home which was the result of a similar state of society in ancient Rome, in Italy of the Renascence, in France under the Bourbons and in England under the later Stuarts The old spiritual tendencies were also rather latent than dead, the mighty pristine ideal still existed in theory,—they are outlined with extraordinary grandeur by Kalidasa, nor had they yet been weakened or lowered to a less heroic key. It was a time in which one might expect to meet the extremes of indulgence side by side with the extremes of renunciation; for the inherent spirituality of the Hindu nature finally revolted against the splendid and unsatisfying life of the senses. But of this phase Bhartrihari and not Kalidasa is the poet. The greater writer lived evidently in the full heyday of the material age, and there is no sign of any setting in of the sickness and dissatisfaction and disillusionment which invariably follow a long outbrust of materialism.

The flourishing of the plastic arts had prepared surroundings of great external beauty of the kind needed for

Kalidasa's poetic work. The appreciation of beauty in nature, of the grandeur of mountain and forest, the loveliness of lakes and rivers, the charm of bird and beast life had become a part of contemporary culture. These and the sensitive appreciation of trees and plants and hills as living things, the sentimental feeling of brotherhood with animals which had influenced and been encouraged by Buddhism, the romantic mythological world still farther romanticised by Kalidasa's warm humanism and fine poetic sensibility, gave him exquisite grace and grandeur of background and scenic variety The delight of the eye, the delight of the ear, smell, palate, touch, the satisfaction of the imagination and taste are the texture of his poetical creation and into this he has worked the most beautiful flowers of emotion and intellectual or aesthetic ideality. The scenery of his work is a universal paradise of beautiful things. All therein obeys one law of earthly grace; morality is aestheticised, intellect suffused and governed with the sense of beauty. And yet this poetry does not swim in languor, does not dissolve itself in sensuous weakness; it is not heavy with its own dissoluteness, heavy of curl and heavy of eyelid, cloyed by its own sweets, as the poetry of the senses usually is. Kalidasa is saved from this by the chastity of his style, his aim at burdened precision and energy of phrase, his unsleeping artistic vigilance.

As in the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* we have an absorbing intellectual impulse or a dynamic force of moral or immoral excitement driving the characters, so we have in Kalidasa an intense hedonistic impulse thrilling through speech and informing action. An imaginative pleasure in all shades of thought and of sentiment, a rich delight of the mind in its emotions, a luxuriousness of ecstasy and grief, a free abandonment to amorous impulse and rapture,

a continual joy of life and seeking of beauty mark the period when India, having for the time exhausted the possibilities of soul-experience attainable through the spirit and the imaginative reason, was now attempting to find out the utmost each sense could feel, probing and sounding the soul-possibilities in matter and even seeking God through the senses

The emotional religion of the Vaishnava Puranas which takes as its type the relation between the human soul and the Supreme, the passion of a woman for her lover, is already developing The corresponding Tantric development of Shaivism may not yet have established itself fully; but the concretisation of the idea of Purusha-Prakriti, the union of Ishvara and Shakti, from which it arose, was already there in the symbolic legends of the Puranas and one of these is the subject of Kalidasa's greatest epic poem The *Birth of the War-God* stands on the same height in classical Sanskrit as the *Paradise Lost* in English literature it is the masterpiece and *magnum opus* of the age on the epic level The central idea of this great unfinished poem, the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, typified in its original idea the union of Purusha and Prakriti, the supreme Soul and dynamic divine legend was used esoterically to typify also the Nature-Soul's search for and attainment of God, and something of this conception pierces through the description of Parvati's seeking after Shiva

Such was the age of Kalidasa, the temper of the civilization which produced him: other poets of the time expressed one side of it or another, but his work is its splendid integral epitome, its picture of many composite hues and tones Of the temperament of that civilization the *Seasons* is an immature poetic self-expression, the *House of Raghu* the representative epic, the *Cloud*

Messenger the descriptive elegy, *Shakuntala* with its two sister love plays intimate dramatic pictures and the *Birth of the War-God* the grand religious fable. Kalidasa, who expressed so many sides and faces of it in writing, stands for its representative man and genius, as was Vyasa of the intellectual mood of Indian civilization and Valmiki of its moral side.

It was the supreme misfortune of India that before she was able to complete the round of her experience and gather up the fruit of her millenniums of search and travail by commencing a fourth and more perfect age in which moral, intellectual and material development should be all equally harmonised and all spiritualised, the inrush of barbarians broke in finally on her endless solitary *tapasya* of effort and beat her national life into fragments. A preparation for such an age may be glimpsed in the new tendencies of spiritual seeking that began with Shankara and continued in later Vaishnavism and Shaivism and in new turns of poetry and art, but it found no opportunity of seizing on the life of the nation and throwing it into another mould The work was interrupted before it had well begun; and India was left with only the remnants of the culture of the material age to piece out her existence. Yet even the little that was done afterwards, proved to be much; for it saved her from gradually petrifying and perishing as almost all the old civilizations of Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, petrified and perished, as the material civilization of Europe, unless spiritualised, must before long petrify and perish. That there is still an unexhausted vitality in her, that she yet nourishes the seeds of re-birth and renewal, we owe to Shankara and his successors and the great minds and souls that came after them. Will she yet arise anew, combine her past and continue the great dream where she left it off, shaking off

on the one hand the soils and the filth that have grown on her in her period of downfall and futile struggle, and re-asserting on the other her peculiar individuality and national type against the callow civilization of the West with its dogmatic and intolerant knowledge, its still more dogmatic and intolerant ignorance, its deification of selfishness and force, its violence and its ungoverned Titanism? In doing so lies her one chance of salvation.

(ii) THE MUSE OF KALIDASA

Kalidasa, the most brilliant luminary in the literary firmament of the Gupta Age who has shed lustre on the whole of Sanskrit literature, is by common consent the greatest poet and dramatist that ever lived in India, and his works have enjoyed a high reputation and popularity throughout the ages. Yet, curiously enough, we know hardly anything about his life, and have no definite knowledge of the time when he flourished. As usual, numerous legends and anecdotes have gathered round his name, but they possess little historical value. These represent him as an idiot in early life who later became a great poet through the grace of goddess Kali, and died in Ceylon at the house of a hetaera. He is said to be one of the nine learned men (nine jewels) who graced the court of king Vikramaditya (or king Bhoja of Dhara). It is, however, almost certain that the different scholars who are referred to as his associates could not all have been his contemporaries. Most scholars regard as a historical fact his association with king Vikramaditya of Ujjain, and the deliberate change in the name of the hero of the *Vikramorvashiya* from Pururavas to Vikrama lends colour to it. Some regard this Vikramaditya as the ruler who, according to well established traditions, defeated the

Shakas in B.C. 58 and founded an era the well-known Vikrama samvat —to commemorate this fact. Most modern scholars, however, do not believe that there was any king Vikramaditya in B.C. 58, or that Kalidasa flourished at so early a period. The general opinion seems to be that he lived at the court of a Gupta Emperor, most probably Chandra-gupta II, who was also known as Vikramaditya, and, having defeated the Shaka Satraps, could well lay claim to the title Shakari which is associated with the Vikamaditya of tradition. The only definite data about the date of Kalidasa are that he must have flourished after Agnimitra (*c.* B.C. 150), who is the hero of one of his dramas, and before A.D. 634, the date of the famous Aihole inscription which refers to him as a great poet. If, as is held by competent scholars, some verses in the Mandasor Inscription of A.D. 473 indicate knowledge of Kalidasa's works, the lower limit of his date may be fixed at about A.D. 450. The theory that Kalidasa flourished in the Gupta Age is now generally accepted and is supported by various arguments, viz. that he borrowed from Ashvaghosha and Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* and revised *Setubandha* of the Vakataka king Pravarasena II, that his works contain veiled allusions to the names of Gupta Emperors, that he knew of the Huna invasion, etc. But these are all mere conjectures which do not carry conviction. While it may be permissible to argue that "the balance of evidence suggests that the end of the fourth century A.D. is the most probable date of the poet", we must admit that the evidence adduced in support of it is neither definite, nor direct and decisive. The safest course is to hold that Kalidasa flourished some time between 100 B.C. and A.D. 450.

A close perusal of his works shows that Kalidasa was a pious Brahman of Ujjain and a liberal Shaiva by belief,

who had acquired a knowledge of the various branches of Brahmanical learning and gathered vast experience by travelling far and wide throughout India. He shows his familiarity with the whole range of Vedic literature, the philosophical systems, especially the Sankhya and Yoga, the various works on Dharmashastra, the *Kamasutra*, Natyashastra, Vyakarana, Jyotishashastra, and even fine arts like music, drawing, and painting His versatile genius, his acquaintance with court etiquette, his shrewdness, his modesty, not without a due sense of self-respect, and his poetic talent are very well reflected in his works which are all permeated with a feeling of ease and contentment—"perfect satisfaction with the existing order of things".

The best known work of Kalidasa is his drama *Shakuntala*. This play is, by common consent, one of the best not only in Sanskrit literature, but in the literature of the world. Kalidasa has based the play on the story of Shakuntala as found in the *Mahabharata*, but he has breathed quite a new and vital spirit into it by introducing several slight but effective changes in the original and also by adding to it some altogether new characters and incidents of high dramatic power. Thus, for example, while the *Mahabharata* shows Kanva as having gone out merely for fetching flowers etc, Kalidasa sends him, on a plausible ground, further away, thus postponing his return to the hermitage to an indefinite future. Similarly in the original we find Shakuntala herself narrating the story of her birth to the king and later on bargaining with him before accepting his suit. Kalidasa, with his dramatic instinct, has made Anasuya, a friend of Shakuntala, narrate Shakuntala's past (and that too with proper decorum), while the idea of bargaining has been altogether dropped, only to give us an exquisitely charming picture of the working of love in the heart of a young innocent maiden.

The curse of the wrathful Durvasas, the loss of the ring, the scene of the fisherman and the concluding portion of the play, which charm the audience by creating alternately an atmosphere of suspense and relief, are products of Kalidasa's genius. By these dramatic touches Kalidasa has created a magnificent edifice out of the brick and mortar supplied by the *Mahabharata* He has succeeded, not only in rescuing the hero and the heroine from the crudities under which they labour in the original and bestowing on them the vital qualities required in a hero or a heroine worth the name, but also in giving us a very fine portrait of an ideal king in Dushyanta, and a bewitchingly transporting picture of the life of a truly Indian maiden in all the three important stages. A loving sympathy with nature forms the background of this play in which Kalidasa has also displayed his mastery in delineating sentiment, his wonderful skill in characterization, construction of plots, and creating dramatic situations, as well as his great lyrical gifts The dramatic power and poetic beauties of this unique work have elicited the highest praise and admiration from scholars all over the world.

Before *Shakuntala*, Kalidasa had already composed two plays, the *Malavikagnimitra* and the *Vikramorvashiya*. The former is a court comedy wherein king Agnimitra falls in love with a maid in the service of one of his queens and, in spite of repeated obstacles on the part of the queen, at last succeeds in his project with the help of his friend, the Vidushaka. There can be little doubt that this is the first play composed by the poet as is apparent from the way in which he has in the prologue tried to plead on behalf of the new poem, *nava kavya*. In spite of several defects, the play bears the unmistakable stamp of Kalidasa's workmanship; and his authorship of it can hardly be doubted. The *Vikramorvashiya* is a fairy-tale of the

love of a celestial nymph and a mortal. Mme. de Willman-Grabowska considers this to be the last of Kalidasa's plays and remarks that "it already shows signs of commencing decline." Some hold that the play was very probably composed on the occasion of the installation of Kumaragupta as *Yuvaraja*. Welding together the elements of the ancient Vedic legend found in the *Rig-Veda* and the *Shatapatha-Brahmana* and its versions in the *Vishnu* and *Bhagavata Puranas* and possibly also in the *Brihatkatha*, Kalidasa has introduced therein several incidents and scenes of his own creation. In this play he seems to have concentrated more on characterization than on plot-construction as he has done in the *Malavikagnimitra*. But the most debated portion of the play is Act IV where the hero, distracted by separation, gives vent to his feelings in short, sweet, and pathetic lyrics. These in themselves are exquisite, but they detract from the movement and dramatic power of the composition. But it is this very defect that constitutes for posterity the peculiar charm of the work and has won for Kalidasa such a high degree of popularity.

Kalidasa's genius shone with equal brilliance both in drama and in poetry or Kavya. His two Mahakavyas, *Raghuvamsha* and *Kumarasambhava*, and the lyrical poem *Meghaduta* are universally regarded as gems of Sanskrit poetry. The *Kumarasambhava* in eighteen cantos tells us the story of the birth of Kumara, the son of Shiva and Parvati, who led the celestial forces and vanquished the demon Taraka. Commentators like Mallinatha have commented only on the first eight cantos of this poem, and one of them has in clear terms recorded the belief that the poem was left incomplete owing to the curse of Parvati whose anger was provoked by the descriptions in Canto VIII. It is also evident that the later cantos are much inferior in poetic power and hence they are not regarded

as the work of Kalidasa. It would seem, therefore, that Kalidasa left this work incomplete; for the title of *Kumarasambhava* requires that at least the birth of Kumara should be included in the poem. Kalidasa has displayed considerable skill in delineating the main characters and the poem contains several passages of enchanting beauty, such as the *Ratívilapa*, the conversation between Parvati and God Shiva in the guise of a Jatila, the description of the Himalaya in Canto I, and of the sudden advent of spring in Canto III. The poet, however, has exposed himself to criticism at the hands of rhetoricians like Anandavardhana by indulging in what may be called sacrilegious description in the eighth canto.

In the *Raghuvamsha* the poet has set himself the onerous task of describing the varied incidents in the lives of several monarchs, who though possessed of some common characteristics, must needs have individuality of their own; and it must be admitted that he has achieved his purpose in a superb manner. The merit of *Raghuvamsha* as a Mahakavya is unquestioned and the Indian estimate of it is well reflected in the fact that our poet is pre-eminently known as *Raghukara* (author of *Raghuvamsha*). This poem, which is based on the *Ramayana* and some Puranas, describes in all thirty kings of the Solar race among whom Raghu appears to be singularly fortunate in having not only illustrious ancestors but also illustrious descendants for at least three immediate successors. That seems to be the reason why Kalidasa named his poem after Raghu. This poem, as we have it, is evidently also incomplete, breaking off with the description of the lascivious Agnivarna. In spite of the reports of the existence of more cantos it is likely that Kalidasa composed it only up to the end of the 19th canto and left it there owing to illness or death. This poem also, like its compeer *Kumarasam-*

bhava, has several enchanting sections, the most appealing among them being the *Ajavilapa.*

Among the lesser poems of Kalidasa, the *Ritusamhara* is now generally accepted as his first work, though some have recently expressed doubts about his authorship of it. The neglect by rhetoricians and commentators and also its inferiority in some respects need not however, detract from its genuineness. Its subject is so simple and so devoid of opportunities for characterization, etc. that it naturally failed to evoke much interest. It contains six cantos describing the six seasons bearing ample testimony to the poet's minute observation and love of nature.

The *Meghaduta* is, however, among the most fascinating little poems that ever came to be written in Sanskrit. In a little over a hundred verses the poet has displayed the vitality and versatility of his poetic genius. An imaginary Yaksha, separated from his beloved through his master's curse and maddened with pangs of separation at the sight of a cloud, requests this cloud to carry his message from Ramagiri (for that was where he was in exile) to Alaka, the abode of his beloved, and describes in detail the path it should follow and the various places of interest that it would traverse. The poet has chosen the Mandakranta metre and has thus given us a complete picture in each one of the constituent verses. This poem has been variously called a lyric, an elegy or even a monody, though Sthiradeva would insist on calling it a Mahakavya, while Vallabhadeva would call it only a Khandakavya. Ramagiri, where the Yaksha was in exile, is now identified with Ramtek near Nagpur. The story of Ashadha-krishna Ekadashi, Yogini mahatmya, is said to be the source of the theme of this poem. This exquisite little poem has evoked the highest admiration of literary critics of all ages. According to a modern European writer "it is difficult to

praise too highly either the brilliance of the description of the cloud's progress or the pathos of the picture of the wife, sorrowful and alone."

As to the comparative merits of the different poetical works of Kalidasa, the same critic observes: "Indian criticism has ranked *Meghaduta* highest among Kalidasa's poems for brevity of expression, richness of content, and power to elicit sentiment, and the praise is not undeserved. . . . . To modern taste the *Kumarasambhava* appeals more deeply by reason of its richer variety, the brilliance of its fancy and the greater warmth of its feeling. . . Though inferior in some slight degree to the *Kumarasambhava*, the *Raghuvamsha* may rightly be ranked as the finest Indian specimen of the Mahakavya as defined by writers on poetics."

Kalidasa is "unquestionably the finest master of Indian poetic style", and his inimitable skill in the use of the simile has become proverbial His charming and graceful diction, the refinement of his language and sentiments, his minute observations of man and nature, his innate sense of beauty, his masterly use of metaphors and other figures of speech, his elevation of thought and suggestiveness of expression have immortalised him, and as has been aptly expressed, his works will endure so long as human beings retain a taste for great literature.

Both in drama and poetry Kalidasa stands not only unsurpassed but even unrivalled. Nevertheless many other poets and dramatists flourished during the age and some of them were not unworthy successors of the great poet.

(iii) SHAKUNTALA

"Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,

Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole name combine?
I name thee, O Shakuntala, and all at once is said."

—Goethe.

GOETHE, the master-poet of Europe, has summed up his criticism of *Shakuntala* in a single quatrain; he has not taken the poem to pieces. This quatrain seems to be a small thing like the flame of a candle, but it lights up the whole drama in an instant and reveals its inner nature. In Goethe's words *Shakuntala* blends together the young year's blossoms and the fruits of its maturity; it combines heaven and earth in one.

We are apt to pass over this eulogy as a mere poetical outburst. We are apt to consider that it only means in effect that Goethe regarded *Shakuntala* as fine poetry. But it is not really so. His stanza breathes not the exaggeration of rapture, but the deliberate judgment of a true critic. There is a special point in his words. Goethe says expressly that *Shakuntala* contains the history of a development,—the development of flower into fruit, of earth into heaven, of matter into spirit.

In truth there are unions in *Shakuntala*: and the motif of the play is the progress from the earlier union of the First Act, with its earthly, unstable beauty and romance, to the higher union in the heavenly hermitage of eternal bliss described in the Last Act. This drama was meant not for dealing with a particular passion, not for developing a particular character, but for translating the whole subject from one world to another,—to elevate love from the sphere of physical beauty to the eternal heaven of moral beauty.

With the greatest ease Kalidasa has effected this junction of earth with heaven. His earth so naturally passes into heaven that we do not mark the boundary-line

the deeper feminine soul,—sober, patient under ill, intent on austerities, strictly regulated by the sacred laws of piety. With matchless art Kalidasa has placed his heroine on the meeting-point of action and calmness, of Nature and Law, of river and ocean, as it were. Her father was a hermit, but her mother was an *apsara*, a nymph. Her birth was the outcome of interrupted austerities, but her nurture was in a hermitage, which is just the spot where nature and austerities, beauty and restraint, are harmonised. There is none of the conventional bonds of society there, yet we have the harder regulations of religion. Her Gandharva marriage, too, was of the same type: it had the wildness of Nature joined to the social tie of wedlock. The drama stands alone and unrivalled in all literature, because it depicts how restraint can be harmonised with freedom. All its joys and sorrows, unions and partings, proceed from the conflict of these two forces.

Shakuntala's simplicity is natural, that of Miranda not truly so. The different circumstances under which the two were brought up, account for this difference. Shakuntala's simplicity was not girt round by ignorance, as was the case with Miranda. We see in the First Act that Shakuntala's two companions did not let her remain unaware of the fact that she was in the first bloom of youth. She had learnt to be bashful. She also knew something of the world, because the hermitage did not stand altogether outside society; the rules of home-life were observed here too. She was inexperienced, though not ignorant, of the outside world; but trustfulness was firmly enthroned in her heart. The simplicity which springs from such trustfulness had for a moment caused her fall, but it also redeemed her for ever. The trustfulness kept her constant to patience, forgiveness and loving kindness, in spite of the cruellest breach of her confidence.* Miranda's simplicity was never sub-

jected to such a fiery ordeal ; it never clashed with knowledge of the world.

Our rebellious passions raise storms. In this drama Kalidasa has extinguished the volcanic fire of tumultuous passion by means of the tears of the penitent heart. But he has not dealt too long on the disease ; he has just given us a glimpse of it and then dropped the veil. The desertion of Shakuntala by the polygamous Dushyanta, which in real life would have happened as a natural consequence of his character, is here brought about by the curse of Durvasas. Otherwise, the desertion would have been extremely cruel and pathetic and would have destroyed the peace and harmony of the whole play. But the poet has left a small rent in the veil through which we can get an idea of the royal sin. It is in the Fifth Act Just before Shakuntala arrives at court and is repudiated by her husband, the poet momentarily draws aside the curtain from the King's love-affairs. Queen Hamsapadika is singing to herself in her music room :

" O honey-bee, having sucked the mango blossoms in your search for new honey, you have clean forgotten your recent loving welcome by the lotus."

This tear-stained song of a stricken heart in the royal harem gives us a rude shock, especially as our heart was hitherto filled with Dushyanta's love-passages with Shakuntala. Only in the preceding Act we saw Shakuntala setting out for her husband's home in a very holy, sweet, and tender mood, carrying with herself the blessings of the hoary sage Kanva and the good wishes of the whole forest world. And now a stain falls on the picture we had so hopefully formed of the home of love to which she was going.

When the Jester asked, " What means this song?" Dushyanta smiled and said, " We desert our lasses after a

short spell of love-making, and therefore I have deserved this strong rebuke from Queen Hamsapadika." This indication of the fickleness of royal love is not purposeless at the beginning of the Fifth Act. With masterly skill the poet here shows that what Durvasa's curse had brought about had its seeds in human nature.

In passing from the Fourth Act to the Fifth we suddenly enter a new atmosphere ; from the ideal world of the hermitage we go forth to the royal court with its hard hearts and crooked ways of love-making. The beauteous dream of the hermitage is about to be broken. The two young monks who are escorting Shakuntala, at once feel that they have entered an altogether different world, " a house encircled by fire." By such touches at the beginning of the Fifth Act, the poet prepares us for the repudiation of Shakuntala at its end.

Then comes the repudiation Shakuntala feels as if she has been suddenly struck with a thunderbolt. Like a deer stricken by a trusted hand, this daughter of the forest looks on with blank surprise, terror, and anguish At one blow she is hurled away from the hermitage, both literal and metaphorical in which she has so long lived. She loses her connection with the loving friends, the birds, beasts and plants and the beauty, peace and purity of her former life. She now stands alone, shelterless. In one moment the music of the first four Acts is stilled.

O the deep silence and loneliness that then surround her! She whose tender heart had made the whole world of the hermitage her own folk, today stands absolutely alone. She fills this vast vacuity with her mighty sorrows. With rare poetic insight Kalidasa has declined to restore Shakuntala to Kanva's hermitage. After the renunciation by Dushyanta it was impossible for her to live in harmony with that hermitage in the way she had done before. She

was no longer her former self , her relation with the universe had changed. Had she been placed again amidst her old surroundings, it would only have cruelly exhibited the utter inconsistency of the whole situation. A mighty silence was now needed, worthy of the mighty grief of the mourner. But the poet has not shown us the picture of Shakuntala in the new hermitage,—parted from the friends of her girlhood, and nursing the grief of separation from her lover. The silence of the poet only deepens our sense of the silence and vacancy which here reigned round Shakuntala. Had the repudiated wife been taken back to Kanva's home, that hermitage would have spoken. To our imagination its trees and creepers would have wept, the two girl friends would have mourned for Shakuntala, even if the poet had not said a word about it. But in the unfamiliar hermitage of Maricha, all is still and silent to us ; only we have before our mind's eye a picture of the world-abandoned Shakuntala's infinite sorrow, disciplined by penance, sedate and resigned,—seated like a recluse rapt in meditation.

Dushyanta is now consumed by remorse. This remorse is *tapasya.* So long as Shakuntala was not won by means of this repentance, there was no glory in winning her. One sudden gust of youthful impulse had in a moment given her up to Dushyanta, but that was not the true, the full winning of her. The best means of winning is by devotion, by *tapasya.* What is easily gained is as easily lost. Therefore, the poet has made the two lovers undergo a long and austere *tapasya* that they may gain each other truly, eternally. If Dushyanta had accepted Shakuntala when she was first brought to his court, she would have only added to the number of Hamsapadikas, occupied a corner of the royal harem, and passed the rest of her life in neglect, gloom and uselessness.

It was a blessing in disguise for Shakuntala that Dush-

yanta abjured her with cruel sternness. When afterwards this cruelty reacted on himself, it prevented him from remaining indifferent to her. His unceasing and intense grief fused his heart and welded Shakuntala with it. Never before had the king met with such an experience. Never before had he had the occasion and means of loving truly. Kings are unlucky in this respect ; their desires are so easily satisfied that they never get what is to be gained by devotion alone Fate now plunged Dushyanta into deep grief and thus made him worthy of true love,—made him renounce the role of a rake.

Thus has Kalidasa burnt away vice in the internal fire of the sinner's heart ; he has not tried to conceal it from the outside. When the curtain drops on the last Act, we feel that all the evil has been destroyed as on a funeral pyre, and the peace born of a perfect and satisfactory fruition reigns in our hearts. He has made the physical union of Dushyanta and Shakuntala tread the path of sorrow, and thereby chastened and sublimated it into a moral union. Hence did Goethe rightly say that *Shakuntala* combines the blossoms of Spring with the fruits of Autumn ; it combines Heaven and Earth Truly in *Shakuntala* there is one Paradise lost and another regained.

The poet has shown how the union of Dushyanta and Shakuntala in the First Act as mere lovers is futile, while their union in the Last Act as the parents of Bharata is a true union. The First Act is full of brilliancy and movement. We there have a hermit's daughter in the exuberance of youth, her two companions running over with playfulness, the newly flowering forest creeper, the bee intoxicated with perfume, the fascinated king peeping from behind the trees. From this Eden of bliss Shakuntala, the mere sweetheart of Dushyanta, is exiled in disgrace. But far different was the aspect of the other hermitage where

Shakuntala,—the mother of Bharata and the incarnation of goodness,—took refuge. There no hermit girls water the trees, nor bedew the creepers with their loving sister-like looks, nor feed the young fawn with handfuls of paddy. There a single boy fills the loving bosom of the entire forest world ; he absorbs all the loveliness of the trees, creepers, flowers and foliage. The matrons of the hermitage, in their loving anxiety, are fully taken up with the unruly boy. When Shakuntala appears, we see her clad in a dusty robe, face pale with austerities, doing the penance of a lorn wife, pure-souled. Her long penances have purged her of the evil of her first union with Dushyanta, she is now invested with a new dignity, she is the image of motherhood, gentle and exquisite. Who can repudiate her now?

The poet has shown here, as in *Kumarasambhava,* that the Beauty that goes hand in hand with Moral Law is eternal, that the calm, controlled and beneficent form of Love is its best expression, that Beauty is truly charming under restraint and decays quickly when it gets wild and unfettered. This ancient poet of India refuses to recognise Love as its own highest glory; he proclaims that Goodness is the final goal of Love. He teaches us that the love of man and woman is neither beautiful, nor lasting, so long as it remains self-centred, so long as it does not yield fruit, so long as it does not diffuse itself in society over son and daughter, guests and neighbours.

The two peculiar principles of India are the beneficent tie of home life on the one hand, and the liberty of the soul abstracted from the world on the other. In the world India is variously connected with many races and many creeds ; she cannot reject any of them. But on the altar of devotion (*tapasya*) India sits alone. Kalidasa has shown, both in *Shakuntala* and *Kumarasambhava,* that there

is a harmony between these two principles, an easy transition from the one to the other. In his hermitage human boys play with lion cubs, and the hermit-spirit is reconciled with the spirit of the householder.

On the foundation of the hermitage of recluses Kalidasa has built the home of the householder. He has rescued the relation of the sexes from the sway of lust and enthroned it in the holy and pure seat of asceticism. In the sacred books of the Hindus the ordered relation of the sexes has been defined by strict injunctions and laws. Kalidasa has demonstrated that relation by means of the elements of Beauty. The Beauty that he adores is lit up by grace, modesty and goodness, in its range it embraces the whole universe. It is fulfilled by renunciation, gratified by sorrow, and rendered eternal by religion. In the midst of this Beauty, the impetuous, unruly love of man and woman has restrained itself and attained to a profound peace, like a wild torrent merged in the ocean of Goodness. Therefore is such love higher and more wonderful than wild and unrestrained passion.

VIII

EARLY TAMIL LITERATURE

Antiquity: The Dravidian group of languages comprises Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam, besides dialects like Tulu, Kodagu, Gondi and some other including Brahui spoken in Baluchistan Tamil, however, leads the rest chronologically as well as in respect of its recorded achievement. It is also the representative language of the family, and its vocabulary and systematized grammar inspired the other languages of the Dravidian group. For example, Tamil developed a mature literature at least 1000 years before Kannada, which possesses the earliest literature in the Dravidian group after Tamil. Telugu literature developed even later than Kannada by about three centuries, and as for Malayalam, before the tenth century it was Sentamil or pure Tamil.

Sangams:—Tamil literature historically begins with the Sangams. "Sangam" means society or academy to which authors submitted their writings for approval. According to tradition, there were three Sangams, all of which flourished under the patronage of the Pandya or the Pallava kings, and mythological stories about the activities of the Sangams are recorded. It is stated that the first Sangam was held in old Madura and the second in Kapatapuram or Alaivai and the sage Agastya presided over both; the third Sangam was held in north Madura. The underlying historical fact seems to be that the venue of the

Sangam changed with the capital, which is known to have shifted from old Madura to Kapatapuram, and from there to north Madura.

The traditional accounts of the first two Sangams where gods and mortals freely exchanged ideas have no historical value. Equally useless are the traditional dates which go back to thousands of years. It is therefore reasonable to assume that B.C. 500 and A D. 500 are the limits of the Sangam age.

None of the works of the first Sangam has come down to us. From the second, apart from stray verses cited by later writers, only one work, *Tolkappiyam*, has survived. It is essentially a grammatical work like *Bhattikavya*, but not exactly a grammar. Its essential purpose was to present a detailed analysis of the means of expression in literature including the study of words and letters. Thus *Tolkappiyam* deals in detail with orthography, etymology, rhetoric, prosody, the expressions of love and war as instances of subjective and objective experiences. the language of flowers, contemporary manners and customs. It is a storehouse of information and has been regarded as a manual of study both for worldly life and for salvation.

Fortunately, a larger number of products of the third Sangam have survived in anthologies. Three of the most famous amongst them are The Ten Idylls (*Patthuppattu*), The Eight Collections (*Ettuthokai*), and the Eighteen Minor Didactic Poems (*Padinenkilkanakku*).

The Ten Idylls, composed by eight different authors, are descriptive poems. Naturally their subject matters are different. One idyll by Nakkirar, who has been called the Johnson of Tamil, is an eulogy of god Muruga and his shrines, while the other idyll by the same poet describes the condition of king Nedun-Jeliyan in the battle

field and of his lonely queen in the palace. This latter theme also forms the subject matter of another idyll, *Mullaippattu*, by Napputhanar. Slightly different is the theme of *Pattinappalai* by Rudran Kannanar, where the hero finds the call of love more seductive than that of battle drums and decides to stay with his beloved. This moving love song is said to have earned for its author a royal reward from the Chola king Karikala. But such rewards were probably happy exceptions; Kanniar's *Porunaratruppadai* portrays a convincing picture of an average man of letters moving about in tattered rags. The lot of poets, even in the golden age of the Sangams, may not after all have differed much from that of their modern confreres.

Other idylls describe social customs and manners, city life, or the glory of the Pandyan kingdom.

Next comes the Eight Collections (*Ettuthokai*) containing more than 2000 verses many of which are of great historical value as they describe the customs of the period. It is interesting to note that one of the authors was a lady, Kakkai Padiniar, who may therefore be called one of the earliest poetesses of India.

Concrete, alive with the play of thought, these poems present a vivid picture of a vigorous material civilization. Apart from their intrinsic poetical merit, they are also an inexhaustible source-book of the early social history of the Tamil land. We quote here a poem from Narrinal where a neglected wife complains.

My garments stained with dirt and lampblack
smell of ghee and curry,
My shoulders stink with the sweat of the child
who feeds at my breast.
I cannot see my lord, who in gay attire,
rides in his car to harlot's quarter.[1]

1 Tr. by H.A.L. Basham: *Wonder That Was India*, p. 774.

The literary value of these poems, particularly of the Ten Idylls, can hardly be over-estimated. Concise and elegant, lively, pulsating with human sentiments, sometimes poignantly, these poems may be called, in the plenitude of the term, classic. More sober and less rhetorical than Pindar, who is the best term of comparison, they are perhaps the only products of Indian literature, which, free from precosity and the abuse of intellectual virtuosity, have the grace, equilibrium and the soberiety of Attic art.[1]

Next comes the Eighteen Minor Didactic Poems of which the most well-known is the world-famous classic, the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar. The popularity of the *Kural* is so great that it is possible even now to collect from oral tradition practically the whole work. Indeed it has sometimes been called the "Bible of the Tamil Land".

The *Kural* is divided into 113 chapters, each containing ten couplets (*kural*) or distiches, each complete in itself. Tiruvalluvar sings of virtue, morals, love, happiness, prosperity and wealth from a high ethical standpoint in verses that have the beauty, brevity and finality of a Japanese *haikku* in which whole worlds of significant suggestion or pointed advice find their glittering place. Ethics, statecraft, love, the art of life, all yield their secrets to Tiruvalluvar. His work is not, therefore, inaptly called "Veda in miniature", "a mustard seed in which is comprehended the riches of the seven seas."

Here are a few examples of Tiruvalluvar's aphorisms:

The learned fools are they
  who cannot move in harmony with the world. (140)
Great are those who fast and penance
  but greater are they who put up with insults. (160)
The glances of her collyrium-painted eyes have a double
  sway;

1 P. Meille: *L'Inde Classique*, ed. by L. Renou and others. p. 302.

one hurts and the other heals. (1091)
The flute is sweet, the *vina* is sweet, they say—
they who have not heard the prattle of their little
one. (66)
(Tr. by V. R. R. Dikshitar)

It should be remembered that the *Kural* is the eleventh of the Eighteen Minor Poems. The first of the poems is *Naladiyar,* an anthology of 400 *venbas* or quatrains composed by various Jain authors. Unlike the *Kural,* therefore, *Naladiyar* is an unequal work, but it includes a great deal that is first-rate, justifying the saying in the Tamil country: "Just as the banyan and neem tree are good for one's teeth, *Naladiyar* and *Kural* are good for one's speeches." The other sixteen Minor Poems contain didactic verses, some of them of great beauty.

Epics:—Five major and five minor epics were composed during this age, of which the more famous are *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai,* both of them major epics. Two major and one minor epics are lost.

Silappadikaram and *Manimekhalai* have been called the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey* of Tamil literature According to tradition, Ilango-Adigal, younger brother of the Chera king, Senguttuvan, became a monk. In the course of his wanderings, Ilango met the Buddhist poet Sittalai Sattanar, who read out to him the *Manimekhalai.* Ilango, thereupon, wrote *Silappadikaram,* tracing Sattanar's story one generation earlier. This tradition, like many other good ones, may be entirely fanciful, but it is evident that the two poets were supposed to be contemporaries.

Silappadikaram or *The Story of the Anklet* tells the tragic story of Kovalan and Kannaki. Infatuated with the courtesan Madhavi, Kovalan, a rich merchant, deserts his faithful wife Kannaki. Gradually Kovalan fritters away all his wealth and even Kannaki's jewels on the

danseuse. At last, penniless, Kovalan repents, and is forgiven by Kannaki, who gives him her remaining treasure, a pair of precious anklets. With that as capital the couple, united in adversity, goes to Madura, where Kovalan hopes to recover his fortune.

At Madura, Kovalan goes to the market to sell one of Kannaki's anklets. But the queen has just been robbed of a similar ornament, and the goldsmith, whom Kovalan approaches, immediately informs the authorities. At once Kovalan is arrested, produced before the king and at his order beheaded.

Kannaki faints away on hearing the news, but quickly recovers. With eyes ablaze with wrath, she goes out carrying the other anklet, the proof of her husband's innocence. To the women of Madura she appeals:

"Things which should never have happened have befallen me. How can I bear this injustice?"

The people of the rich city of Madura saw her, and were moved by grief and affliction. They said: "Wrong that cannot be undone has been done to this lady."

In the evening Kannaki sees Kovalan's body lying in a pool of blood. "But he saw not the agony of her grief as she mourned in sorrow and wrath" Kannaki cries:

"Are there women here? Are there women who can endure such injustice done to their wedded husbands? Are there such women?

"Are there good people? Are there good people here? Are there good people who nurture and fend for children born of them? Are there good people here?

"Is there a God? Is there a God? Is there a God in this Kudal, whose king's sharp sword killed an innocent man? Is there a God?"

(Tr. by V. R. R. Dikshitar)

In Medusa-like splendour, Kannaki freezes the royal

Devotional Poems:—The next landmark in Tamil literature begins with the works of the Shaiva Nayanmars and Vaishnava Alvars Their activities began from the sixth r the seventh century, when forces of Hindu regeneration began to eliminate successfully Jain and Buddhist influences, both from society and literature Isolated Jain poets continued to write, but henceforth the predominant influence in literature was exercised by the exceptionally gifted Nayanmars and Alvars.

To these saintly poets religion was not the acceptance of academic abstractions nor the celebration of empty ceremonies It was the experience of Reality through *bhakti*· faith, humble submission, absolute devotion, love for God But the religious seer in the ecstasy of devotion and fullness of heart was sometimes urged by an intensive creative emotion, he then presented his innermost convictions in forms of poetry or songs, which have rarely been equalled and never surpassed in their poignant depth of feeling and felicity of expression These devotional poems were collected by two religious leaders, Nambi-Andar-Nambi and Sri Nathamuni.

Nambi-Andar-Nambi arranged the Shaiva hymns into eleven *Tirumurais*, of which the first seven are collectively known as *Tevaram* and contain the works of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar The eighth *Tirumurai* known as *Tiruvachakam* is the work of the famous Manikkavachakar, while the ninth is an anthology The tenth book is a collection of the work of the mystic Tirumular, and the eleventh *Tirumurai* is another collection of poems from Nakkirar to Nambi-Andar-Nambi In addition to the *Tirumurais*, there is also the *Periyapuranam*, containing biographical accounts of the sixty-three Shaiva saints held in veneration even to-day These sixty-three saints came from every important Tamil caste then known: kings,

Brahmans, merchants, farmers, shepherds, potters, weavers, hunters, fishermen, untouchables; there were also women saints. *Periyapuranam* is a reminder to the Tamil people that God's love and salvation are quite independent of caste, profession or sex.

Sri Nathamuni collected the works of the twelve Alvars, of whom one was a woman, in a single book called *Nalayira Prabandham*, which contains 4000 hymns.

Nayanmars, The Shaiva Saints:—The foundations of Shaivism in South India were laid by Tirumular, whose work *Tirumandiram* or 3000 *mantras* explained the Shaiva doctrine in the light of his own mystic experience. Tirumular believed that the spirit not less than matter is real, for one is inconceivable independently of the other. The goal is becoming one with God whom Tirumular calls Nandin or Shiva. For achieving one's salvation it is essential that the devotee should choose a reliable guide or guru:

The blind who spurn the guidance of the wise
Will seek the guidance of the blind;
The blind and the blind will dance a blind round,
And together the blind will fall into the ditch.

Appar, Sambandar, Sundarar and Manikkavachakar are the four great exponents of the four paths of salvation: *dasa-marga* (the path of the servant), *satputra-marga* (the path of the good son), *sakha-marga* (the path of the friend), and *san-marga* (the true path).

Manikkavachakar was a prodigy and his overwhelming scholarship induced the Pandya king to appoint him as the Prime Minister. He held his office successfully for many years, but later gave up his life of pomp and pleasure, became a wandering monk and settled down ultimately at Chidambaram. His *Tiruvachakam* occupies in Tamil sacred literature the place of Upanishad. In moving

terms he describes his progress from darkness to divine light:

Grass was I, shrub was I, worm, tree,
Full many a kind of beast, bird, snake,
Stone, man, and demon. 'Midst Thy hosts I served.
The forms of mighty Asuras, ascetics, gods I bore.
Within these immobile and mobile forms of life,
In every species born, weary I've grown, great Lord.

The worst contempt of this man of God was for the graceless:

I dread not mighty jav'lin, dripping gore;
Nor glances of maids with jewell'd arms!
But those that will not sweetly taste His grace,
Whose glance can melt the inmost soul,
Who dances in the hallow'd court,—my Gem
Unstained and pure—nor praise His Name;
Such men of loveless hearts when we behold,
Ah me! we feel no dread like this!

(Tr. by G. U. Pope)

Appar, or Tirunavukkarasu, was of Vellala caste, he was born a Shaiva, became a Jaina and was re-converted to Shaivism. He was a contemporary of the great Pallava king Mahendravarman I (c. A.D. 600-630), who, himself a Jaina, at the instigation of his co-religionists, put Appar to the severest tests The saint informed the king:

We are slaves of nobody, we fear not death:
Sinless, we shall not taste the torments of hell,
Proud are we that we know no ill, no bondage;
Ignorant of pain we are for ever happy.

With the faith of the true believer, he quietly assured his followers:

He is our father and mother,
He is our brother and sister,
Of the three worlds is He creator,

The dweller in the flowery city;
He'll help us all the Unseen God.

Sambandar, the "marvellous boy who died in his prime", was a junior contemporary of Appar. At their first meeting, the Brahman Sambandar, then a me.e boy, addressed the elderly Vellala as "appa" (father). and since then Tirunavukkarasu became famous as Appar.

Sambandar died at the age of sixteen, and one of his most famous songs he is said to have recited at the age of three:

The serpent is His ear-stud, He rides the bull, He is crowned with the pure white crescent;
He is smeared with the ashes of destroyed forests;
He is decked with a garland of full-blossoming flowers;
When of yore His devotees called Him, He came to glittering Pramapuram and bestomed His grace upon all;
He is indeed the thief who has stolen my soul away.

Sundarar was the last of the *Samayacharyas,* the four great teachers of the Shaiva creed in the South. Even now his hymns are on the lips of every Tamil *bhakta* and are sung by musicians in temples and monasteries. Here is a free rendering of one of them:

I'm the slave of all His devotees true,
The slave of all the laureates of the spirit,
The slave of those whose minds do rest in God,
The slave of all the inhabitants of Tiruvarur,
The slave of the priests who daily conduct the divine service thrice,
The slave of the ascetics anointed all over,
The slave of the *bhaktas* beyond Tamilakam's confines,
The slave for ever of Tiruvarur's Lord.

Alvars:—The word "alvar" has been explained as "one in deep wisdom". According to tradition there were twelve Alvars who exercised a spiritual sovereignty over

the hearts of men. Tradition divides them into three groups: ancient, middle and last. According to the same sources, the first four Alvars flourished in B.C. 4203, and the last, Tirumangai, in B.C. 2706. Evidently these dates are useless, though the chronological order of the Alvars may rest on a historical basis.

Like the Nayanmars, the Alvars represented various castes and strata of society, their common characteristic being the love of God Nammalvar, like Appar, was a Vellala by caste, Tirumangai came from a *kalla* (robber) family, Kulashekhara was a prince turned ascetic. This was indeed the noble age of catholicity in Tamil land.

According to tradition, Poykai, Bhutattar and Peyalvar, the first three Alvars, happened to take shelter in the same place in pitch darkness Suddenly they became conscious of a fourth person, a blazing transcendence that raised their level of consciousness and bestowed on them the gift of poetry. And when morning came they gave expression to their ecstatic thoughts in the full majesty of their God-given power.

Poykai:

The river flows to the dark agitated sea;
The lotus gazes at the rising sun;
Life gravitates towards the God of Death;
Knowledge wells up to reach the Divine Consort of Lakshmi,
sprung up from the ravishing lotus.

Bhutattar:

From the knowledge of the Vedas you know that its essence
Is the singing of Purushottama's praise;
If the Veda is beyond you, poor folk, know that
The Veda's cream is but the recitation of Madhava's name.

Peyalvar:

This day I saw the Divine Consort by the side of Her blue-tinted Lord,
I saw His glorious golden effulgence, bright as burning sun,
I saw His golden discus irresistible in war,
I saw His conch that wins the love of its beholders.

Of the five Alvars in the second group, Nammalvar is the most famous. His poems express piercingly the varied mystic notes from self-abasement to the finality of ecstatic union. The core of his faith is expressed in the following verse:

The indwelling God is in all created things and in all the religions professed by man,
It is vain to reach Him through the senses; and He defies mere intellectual understanding;
Seek Him in the soul's sanctuary, the source of all life,
In firm meditation, but free from disturbing mundane thoughts,
And the Lord can be secured for ever.

In his great work called *Tiruviruttam*, Nammalvar compares the *jiva*, who seeks God, to a love-sick maiden pining for divine love. The symbolism of love is intricate and subtle, and the hundred stanzas of the work illustrate practically every shade of unblemished erotic symbolism. For example:

Love's glow is paling, and instead, a dark
And sickly yellow is spreading;—and the night
Becomes an age! This is the matchless wealth
My good heart gave me when it yearned and sought
Keen discus-wielding Kannan's *tulasi* cool!
The flying swans and herons I did beg,
Cringing: "Forget not, ye who first arrive,
If ye behold my heart with Kannan there
Oh, Speak of me, and ask it "Sir, not yet
Hast thou returned to her? And is it right?"

(Tr. by J. S. M Hooper)

We pass over the next two Alvars, Madhurakavi, and Periyalvar, in favour of the latter's daughter Andal, who poured her divine love into some of the finest poems in Tamil. She rightly belongs to the group of women mystics like St. Teresa, Rabia and Mira. Her faith was no transient feeling but abides eternally:

Not for to-day alone
Have we become Thy slaves; but, Govinda,
For aye, for sevenfold births! Only to Thee
We'll service give· from us do Thou remove
All other love ... (Tr. by J. S. M. Hooper)

Kulashekhara, the remaining member of the second group of Alvars, was a king of Travancore who became more and more unworldly, till at last he renounced the throne and wholeheartedly consecrated himself to religion. He seems to describe his own reaction to the material world:

They (the worldly-wise) are but mad men to me,
And I am mad too (*they* think);
Who benefits by this talk?
I call You, Krishna, Ranganatha!
I am mad with longing for You!

Tiruppan, Tondaradippodi and Tirumangai were the last three Alvars. Tiruppan was an untouchable, but so great was his devotion to Ranganatha, that it is said Ranganatha ordered the Brahman priest to bring Tiruppan inside the temple on his shoulder. There, in the presence of his Lord, Tiruppan sang:

Having destroyed the burden of my long-gathered sins,
He made me turn to Him in love, and entered my heart Himself;
I know of no austerities that secured this love;
Rather have I been saved by the divine grace of
Ranganatha, wearing the pearl necklace, with
Lakshmi seated on His fair bosom!

Tondaradippodi lived for a time with a courtesan, got into trouble and was saved by Ranganatha. He exclaims:

Should men live one hundred years as the Vedas say,
One half will be wasted in sleep; the fifty remaining will be likewise wasted
In childhood, boyhood, sensuality, hunger, disease and old age;
O Dweller in Srirangam's temple! I desire birth no more!
(Tr. by J. S. M. Hooper)

The life of Tirumangai, the last of the Alvars, was colourful and adventurous. He was a prolific writer and skilled versifier though as a mystic poet he has to be placed below Nammalvar. One stanza from Tirumangai is given here:

(When you met Guha the boatman) You did not deem him ignorant or strange or of low birth,
But pitied him and further showered on him your celestial grace
And said: "This my companion (Sita) with the shy deer's downcast eyes is your companion as well;
My brother (Lakshmana) is your brother." When he (Guha) wished not to be left behind
You added: "You are my friend, bide here"
These words have come down the ages and have led my heart
To Your feet, ocean-hued in colour, O Lord of Srirangam rich with luxuriant trees!

SECTION II

PHILOSOPHY

IX
INDIAN AND IONIAN PHILOSOPHY

The Earliest Sources of Philosophy:—A basic question that arises in this connection is that of the beginnings of philosophy. Where should we start the story? In Greece or in India? In other words, which country contains the traces of the earliest developments of philosophy?

So far as Greek philosophy is concerned, we are aware of some of its earliest phases. It has been generally recognized that philosophical speculations in Greece cannot be traced earlier than the sixth century B.C. The first Greek thinker whom we can appropriately describe as a philosopher was Thales. A specific incident has helped us to determine his chronology. It is said that he had predicted through his calculations the correct time of an eclipse which took place in B.C. 585. Two men who after Thales gave a new turn to the development of philosophical thought in Greece were Pythagoras and Socrates. Pythagoras lived about B.C. 532 and the death of Socrates took place in B.C. 399.

When, however, we look at India of the sixth century B.C., we see a completely different picture. This period in India witnessed not the beginnings but the development of philosophical thought. It was not a case of the dawn of philosophy as in Greece but what may be described as the full glow of philosophical day. It was not the first faltering steps of the human intellect along the long and arduous

way of philosophical quest but it marked a stage which could have been reached only after a considerable journey.

Two facts are inevitably forced upon our attention in any discussion of this period:

(i) The emergence of Buddhism and Jainism took place in this epoch.

(ii) Before the advent of the Buddha and Mahavira, there had already been a considerable development of philosophical thought in India and systems had emerged which presupposed a long period of wide and deep philosophical speculation.

Gautama the Buddha occupies a peculiar place among the greatest men of the world It is a debatable point whether we should place him in the category of prophets or of philosophers In other words, what was the purport of his teaching? Was it a new revelation or was it a new philosophical discovery? In spite of long controversy, both philosophy and religion continue to claim the Buddha. I do not want to repeat that controversy, but it seems clear to me that it is easier to see him in the role of a philosopher than in that of a prophet. He started on his enquiries in order to solve the problem of life, not to search for the existence of God. Similarly, his quest ended with a solution of that problem and did not concern itself with either the nature or the existence of God. He broke away completely from that religious life of India which believed in innumerable gods and goddesses. He sought and found the consummation of his quest without the intermediation of the concept of God. The principle on which he based his speculative enquiries was itself philosophic. For him the goal of human endeavour is to find a solution of the problem of life and this can be done without recourse to *deus ex machina*. It is, of course, true that after his death, his followers soon transformed his teachings into a full-

fledged religious cult. When they found that he had left unfilled the place normally assigned to God in religion, they placed the Buddha himself on the vacant throne of the deity. This was, however, a development for which the Buddha was not responsible.

Jainism also arose about the same time and was even more indifferent to the existence of God. Like the Buddha, Mahavira also sought an answer to the riddle of existence without any reference to the existence of God. The intellectual constructions of the Jainas are based on principles which properly belong to the world of philosophy.

What I am anxious that readers should specially consider is not the personality of Gautama the Buddha or Mahavira but the background of thought which made their emergence possible. It is a study of this background which is of the greatest importance to the historian of philosophy. The fact that India in the sixth century B C. could exhibit the method and approach of Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira is in itself evidence that the country had developed a widespread and deep philosophical insight. An atmosphere was already in existence in which there could develop different theories and interpretations of the mysteries of life. It is also clear that a stage had been reached where these problems could be solved without presupposing either the existence of God or the revelation of His will.

Such a philosophic temper did not emerge in Greece till much later. Ionian philosophy which is one of the earliest of the Greek schools believed in a theory of souls informing the planets and other stellar bodies. These can hardly be distinguished from the gods and goddesses of popular mythology. Located on the peak of Mount Olympus, they were the gods of religion; when, however, the same gods put on a philosophic garb and mounted the

heavens, they acquired the philosophic title of Intelligences of the Spheres. This tendency of Ionian philosophy continued in all the later schools of Greek thought. If the heavenly souls of Aristotle are subjected to proper scrutiny, it will be seen that they are not very different from the old Hellenic gods. It is true that Socrates protested against the worship of gods, but even he was not able to eradicate completely from philosophy the influence of the popular conception of gods.

If after a general survey of the history of philosophy and religion elsewhere we turn to study the way in which the Indian intellect reacted to their problems, we find ourselves faced with an entirely new approach. Elsewhere, philosophy and religion pursued distinct and different paths; though their paths had at times crossed and the one had influenced the other, the two had never merged. In India, on the other hand, it is not always possible to differentiate between the two. Unlike Greece, philosophy was not confined here to the walls of the academies but became the religion of millions.

The solutions which Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira had found for the problems of existence were, as we have already seen, basically philosophical, but their teachings created religious communities in the same way as the preaching of the Semitic prophets. Socrates was, in many respects, a unique character among the Greek philosophers. He was essentially a philosopher, but to call him only a philosopher does not fully describe his personality. When we try to think of him, we are inevitably reminded of Jesus Christ. What we know of the events of his life have close affinities with the life of the prophets of Israel and the yogis of India. He was often in a state of trance. He also believed in an oracle or inner voice which guided him in all moments of crises. When in his last days he

was addressing the court in Athens, he was guided by the behest of this inner voice. Nevertheless, Socrates has been classed among philosophers. His followers did not try to create a religious community based on his personality or his teachings. This fact shows clearly the difference between the Indian and the Greek spirit. In Greece elements of religion acquired the characteristics of philosophy; in India philosophy was itself turned into religion.

The distinction we have drawn between philosophy and religion cannot, therefore, describe accurately the Indian situation. If we try to apply to India the criterion which distinguishes philosophy from religion, we will either have to change the criterion itself or recognize that in India philosophy and religion have pursued the same path.

We have attempted to form an idea of the intellectual make-up of India of the sixth century B.C. from an analysis of the personalities of Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira. We should now enquire into the external evidence to justify the conclusions we have drawn from such internal considerations. This is supplied by the second fact to which I have already drawn the reader's attention. All students of Indian philosophy are to-day agreed that the philosophy of the Upanishads had already begun to develop before the emergence of Gautama the Buddha and Mahavira. It is also admitted generally that those Upanishads which are recognized to be the oldest were composed about the eighth century B.C. Authorities, however, differ as to the period and order of emergence of the six Indian systems or *Darshanas*. According to some, the Charvaka school had been developed before the time of Gautama the Buddha. They quote in evidence certain references in the Upanishads which suggest that a mate-

rialistic interpretation of the universe had already taken shape, and this is the essence of Charvaka's thought. Others have expressed similar opinions about the Sankhya and the Yoga systems. They emphasize the fact that Buddhism contains some parallel lines of thought and infer that these two schools must be, if not earlier than, at least contemporaneous with Gautama the Buddha.

If the views of these scholars are accepted, the beginnings of Indian philosophy will have to be pushed back several centuries earlier than the seventh century B.C. It is evident that in order to account for such a stage of development in the seventh century B C., metaphysical speculations must have begun here at least several hundred years ago. In Greece it took almost three hundred years to reach from Thales to Aristotle There would be nothing surprising if in India also it had taken an equal period to develop the systems of the Sankhya, the Yoga and the Charvaka from the first gropings of philosophical speculation. It would thus be a plausible inference to hold that the beginnings of Indian philosophy can be traced back to a thousand years before Christ

Our present state of knowledge does not, however, permit us to go so far back. Undoubtedly there are indications which lend support to such inference History cannot, however, be based on suppositions and inferences and demands tangible evidence for its assertions. The fact is that we do not have such evidence. A safe position would, therefore, be to agree with those modern scholars who hold that the evidence for the development of these schools before the age of Gautama the Buddha is not conclusive. All that we can say with assurance is that in the age of the Buddha, the foundations had already been laid on which the six systems of philosophy were later built. To deny this would be less than truth, but to assert

more would be an exaggeration. The verses in the Upanishads which are regarded as evidence of the existence of conflicting schools should be more properly interpreted as anticipations of their positions. They may be regarded as evidence of the fact that different points of view had begun to emerge. It is clear from these hints that some of the thinkers of the day had started to give a materialistic interpretation of the universe. These hints may be regarded as the basis of the Charvaka philosophy, but it does not follow that the Charvaka philosophy had already appeared as a fully developed system.

Those scholars who insist that the Sankhya and the Yoga schools developed before the time of the Buddha on the ground that Buddhism and these systems have certain similarities forget that the same evidence can lead to an opposite conclusion. The fact of similarity between them can be equally well-used to infer that Buddhism was earlier than the Sankhya and the Yoga schools and had influenced them.

These discussions thus prove two things:

(a) There had been a considerable development of Upanishad philosophy before the age of Gautama the Buddha;

(b) The foundations of some of the other schools had been laid although the evidence does not establish conclusively that they had reached their full development. We may therefore safely say that considerable speculative activity had preceded the emergence of the Buddha.

A study of the history of philosophy therefore leads us to the unassailable conclusion that philosophical speculations began earlier in India than in Greece. The sixth century B.C. marks the beginnings of philosophy in Greece, but in India it is an age of considerable philosophical pro-

gress. In a general history of philosophy we should therefore begin the story with India, not with Greece.

II

Mysticism and Philosophy: The earliest Indian philosophy is to be found in the Upanishads, and the Upanishads have a distinct mystic and religious strain. From this fact we should not, like Zeller or Erdmann, draw the erroneous conclusion that early Indian philosophy should be excluded from an account of empirical or rational philosophy. It is true that so long as mysticism is the experience of an individual, we cannot apply to it the tests of philosophical enquiry But when an attempt is made to build up a logical system of speculation on the basis of such experience, it must not only be included within the province of philosophy but may well constitute an important part of it If we do not apply it the name of philosophy, there is hardly any other term which can describe it

What is philosophy? Philosophy is an enquiry into the nature of life and of existence. We have two ways of dealing with reality. One starts and ends with revelation and tradition; we call it religion The second depends on the free exercise of reason and thought and is called philosophy.

Philosophical enquiry from the earliest times has adopted one of two alternate ways of approaching its problems. One is through the world external to him. The characteristic of Indian thought is that it has paid greater attention to the inner world of man than to the outer world. It does not begin with an investigation into outer phenomena and reach towards the inner reality. On the contrary, it starts from the realization of the inner world and reaches out to the world of phenomena. It was this

way of approach that revealed itself in the philosophy of the Upanishads. In Greece also, the earlier schools of philosophy had adopted a similar procedure or at least it was not excluded from their general approach. What we know of the Orphic or the Pythagorian philosophy tends to support this statement. The dialectical method of Socrates was, no doubt, logical, but he declared that he was guided by inner voice. Like Indian philosophy, the message of some Greek philosophers also was "Know thyself". In Platonic idealism we find the germs for the future development of mysticism, as well as of the knowledge of the inner self, but his disciple, Aristotle, did not choose to develop either of these lines of thought. Ultimately, however, mysticism came to fruition in Alexandria and culminated in the philosophy of Neoplatonism. We cannot say definitely whether the Upanishad philosophy of India was responsible for the development of this Alexandrian School. We, however, know that Alexandria had in that era become the meeting-place for the religions and civilizations of the East and the West. Just as gods of different religions had met in its market-place and led to the foundation of the Serapeum, it seems probable that the different streams of human thought and enquiry met here and mingled in one common flow.

What is the basic principle of mysticism? It is that the knowledge of reality cannot be obtained through the senses. If we are to reach reality, we must withdraw from the world of sense into that of inner experience. This principle, in some form or other, worked in the philosophical systems from Pythagoras to Plato. Plato made a sharp distinction between the world of thought and the world of sense. He expressed their difference by the analogy of the distinction between the light of midday and twilight. According to him, whatever we perceive through

the senses is perceived as in twilight. What we perceive through the intellect is seen in the clear light of day. He emphasizes, again and again, the distinction between Appearance and Reality. The senses can reach us only up to the world of Appearance but not to the world of Reality. He expresses the ultimate real as the *Good.* Science, knowledge and truth deal with Ideals which are *like the Good* but it is only the *Good* that is ultimately real. We cannot reach the Real through the mediation of sense. The famous parable of the cave-dwellers which he relates in *The Republic* is the final statement of his philosophy. Though he does not speak of intuitive reason on which Upanishad Philosophy is based, the way in which he repudiates objects of experience given through sense perception brings him very near the attitude of the mystics towards the world of sense

There is also a second similarity between Indian and Greek philosophy which should not be overlooked. The concept of *Nous* in Greek philosophy is not very dissimilar to that of *atman* in Indian philosophy. Plato rejected the views of Anaxagoras and distinguished between two souls. He regards one as immortal and the other as mortal. The mortal soul (irrational soul) is not free from the influence of the body and may be called the ego. The immortal soul is the Idea of the Universe and is free from all influence of the body. This immortal soul is called by him "Universal Soul". If therefore we try to contrast Plato's concept of the mortal soul with that of the immortal soul, it will not be very different from the contrast between *jivatman* and *paramatman* in Indian philosophy.

It will not therefore be proper to exclude Upanishad philosophy from a general account of philosophy on the ground that it is mystic. If we do so we would also have

to exclude a major portion of Greek philosophy from any such general account

We must also remember that what differentiates philosophy from what is non-philosophy is not difference of subject-matter but of method and treatment If a person's conclusion rests upon the authority of revelation or on individual ecstasy, we would more properly describe his findings as theology or mysticism and not philosophy If, however, he adopts a method of intellectual construction and considers that the mystery of existence must be solved on the rational plane, we cannot exclude him from the rank of philosophers even though religious or mystic beliefs may have influenced him Actually, some of the most important material of philosophy is derived from such discourses

In Christianity and Islam there developed certain schools which sought to subordinate philosophy to religion But their own discourses have by general consent been included among philosophical writings The reason for this is that they sought to defend religion against rationalist attacks by the use of rationalist methods The discourses of St Augustine and the later Christian scholastics cannot therefore be excluded from philosophical literature. The same remark applies to the writings of the Muslim scholastics So far as Arab philosophy is concerned, one of the schools of which it can justly be proud will be excluded if we leave out this scholastic literature Among the Arab philosophers the names of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn-al-Rushd (Averroes) are well known, but they were not spokesmen of Arab philosophy proper They were in fact followers and commentators of Aristotle If we want to enquire into Arab philosophy proper, we must turn our eyes from them and study the writings of the scholastics who were often regarded as the antagonists of Greek philosophy. It is interesting to note that in modern times

Bishop Berkeley, who embarked on philosophical speculations in order to establish the truth of religion has been always counted among the philosophers and no history of philosophy is complete without an account of his writings.

Nor is Zeller's criticism that "Indian philosophy never lost contact with religion and never became independent" justified. He perhaps had in mind the veneration in which the Vedas were generally held, but he was probably not aware that there were at least three unorthodox schools that repudiated the authority of the Vedas Neither Buddhism, nor Jainism nor Charvaka philosophy depends on authority or tradition for its findings. Not only so, but even among the orthodox schools Nyaya and Sankhya philosophies often paid only lip service to the authority of the Vedas. We may therefore safely say that Indian philosophy had in the age of Buddha already established a position independent of religion.

III

Philosophical contacts between India and Greece:—There is one other question to which I would like to make a brief reference. If it is an acknowledged fact that philosophy began in India earlier than in Greece, would it be unjustified to suppose that Indian philosophy may have had some influence on the beginnings of Greek philosophy? We know that the civilizations of the Nile and the Euphrates blossomed much before that of Greece. We have reasons to believe that the influence of these civilizations contributed towards the first development of Greek philosophy. Can we not also establish relations, whether direct or indirect, between India and Greece?

Historians of the present day have discussed this problem but have not yet reached any valid conclusions. It

is true that some of the earliest schools of Greek philosophy exhibit characteristics which have a striking resemblance to Indian modes of thought. Such similarities invite the inference that they were probably due to Indian influence. This applies specially to the Orphic cult. Historians are generally agreed that it exhibits elements that are essentially non-Hellenic in nature and suggest an Asian derivation. The idea of salvation as the liberation of the soul from the body is a central theme in the Orphic cult. Zeller admits that this idea originated in India but nevertheless he holds that the Greeks derived it from Persia. Later research does not, however, indicate that such an idea of liberation or *moksha* was an essential element in Zarathushtra's faith. It would not, therefore, be unreasonable to suppose that this concept travelled from India to Greece and influenced the early Greek schools directly or indirectly.

It was an accepted belief in Greece that a journey to the East was necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. It is recorded by various philosophers that they travelled to the East in quest of knowledge. We read of Democritus that he spent a long period in Egypt and Persia. Of Pythagoras it is said that when he left his home in Samos, he travelled to Egypt. It is well known that Solon and Plato had also travelled extensively in the East. It would therefore not be surprising if Pythagoras or some other Greek philosophers of this early period had travelled to India. But there is no historical evidence of such a visit. It has, however, been generally recognized that the philosophy of Pythagoras contains elements which are characteristically Indian. If we describe his philosophy without mentioning his name, a student of Indian philosophy could easily mistake it to be the account of an Indian philosopher. How and why this was so, remains one of

the unsolved problems of the history of philosophy.

We find it stated in the accounts of Alexander that his teacher, Aristotle, had requested him to find out the state of knowledge among Indians. This in itself suggests that the renown of Indian wisdom had reached as far as Greece before Alexander's invasion. After the death of Alexander, legends were built round him. They were written in Greek, but some were translated into Syrian and later from Syrian into Arabic. They contain accounts of his encounters with Indian philosophers. He enquires from them about philosophical problems and admits that philosophy had reached in India a higher stage than in Greece. These stories cannot be regarded as historical. Nevertheless, they indicate that the renown of Indian wisdom had spread to these areas This is borne out by the fact that such stories were freely composed and people listened to them with interest and credence These legends are said to have been composed between the first century B.C. and the first century A D.

We know that in accordance with the usual practice of setting up Greek colonies in all the lands he conquered, Alexander established such colonies on the banks of the Indus.

We further know that the founder of Sceptic philosophy, Pyrrho (d B C. 275), was in the army which came with him to India. After Alexander's death, Seleucus Nicator established close contacts with Chandra Gupta Maurya and sent Megasthenes as his ambassador to his court Relations had thus been established between the Indians and the Greeks before the age of Asoka. This lends support to the theory that intellectual exchanges had also taken place between them. As for Asoka, we know from a still extant inscription that he sent missionaries to the Mediterranean countries and to all the Macedonian

kings, though unfortunately no Western account of these missions has survived.

We may now try to indicate the conclusions which the available evidence justifies. The countries mentioned in the Asokan inscriptions had certainly received the message of Buddhism. It is probable that it had reached still farther as Buddhism was in those days a vigorous proselytizing religion. It is also probable that the influence of India had reached Greece even before the days of Asoka. We have already referred to the remarkable resemblance between Indian thought and some of the early Greek schools, particularly the philosophy of Pythagoras Unless we are to assume that these resemblances are entirely fortuitous, there must have been contacts between India and Greece Such contacts were likely to result in Indian thought influencing Greek thought, as Indian philosophy had already achieved considerable progress and reached a greater degree of maturity than the early schools of Greek philosophy. All these lend support to the theory that Indian philosophy had perhaps contributed to the development of early Greek philosophy, though we have no definite knowledge of the nature and extent of such contribution.

What I have written so far deals with the possible influence of Indian philosophy on Greek philosophy. We should now consider the other aspect of the question, namely, what, if any, are the influences of Greek philosophy and science on India ? It is difficult to give any detailed account of what can be suggested as conclusive. It can, however, be said with confidence that at least in the fourth century A D. and thereafter Indian astronomy was influenced by Greek astronomy. In fact, some terms became current in India. One well-known Indian astrologer, Varahamihira, who died round about A.D. 587, has in his

book, *Brihat-Samhita* referred to Greek astronomers. Another writer of this period whom Alberuni has quoted in his *Indica* has recorded high praise of Greek scholars. We can certainly infer from all this that after the third century A.D. India had become familiar with Greek knowledge and its influence was felt among the learned circles here. So far, however, as the different schools of Indian philosophy are concerned, it is difficult to say with confidence to what extent, if any, they were influenced by Greek thought.

To sum up. It seems that our conclusions will be reasonable if we select two periods in the pre- and the post-Christian eras. We may say that in the pre Christian era Greek philosophy in its earlier phases was perhaps influenced by Indian philosophy. So far as the post-Christian era is concerned, there are reasons to believe that some aspects of Indian thought were influenced by Greek knowledge.

IV

Greece and India.—I would like to make it clear that my emphasis on the need of a comprehensive history of general philosophy is based solely on historical considerations. There is no question of the exaltation or diminution of any country's or nation's contribution We have divided humanity into groups based on geographical boundaries and painted Europe, Asia and Africa in different colours in the map of the world The map of human knowledge cannot, however, be divided into regions of different colours. Knowledge is above all limitations and boundaries. Whatever be the region of the globe where it first emerged, it is the common heritage of all mankind All human beings, regardless of country or nation, can lay claim to it with equal right The fact that Socrates was born in

Greece and the writers of the Upanishads in India may be important from the point of view of their own biography but is irrelevant so far as the history of human knowledge is concerned. It is true that Socrates was a Greek and the writers of the Upanishads were Indians. The addition they have made to human knowledge is, however, neither Greek nor Indian and belongs to the whole of humanity. If philosophy began in India earlier than in Greece, its only effect is that in narrating the history of philosophy we should begin with the mention of India. This does not, however, give any special virtue to India nor detract from the glory of Greece We can apply to human knowledge what the Arab poet has said of the tribe of banu-Amir :

"LA TAQUL DARUBA BI SHARQI NAJDIN
KULLU NAJDIN LIL AMIRIYATI DARU".
Do not say that his house is to the east of Najd.
For all Najd is the dwelling of the tribe of banu-Amir.

X

VEDANTA

THE Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita* are the source-books of Vedanta. It is a remarkable achievement of intellectual imagination—it would not be incorrect to call it inspiration—that the rule of law in science was anticipated in the ancient Hindu scriptures. The God of Vedanta is not an anthropomorphic creation with human capriciousness—a conception against which the veriest tyro in modern science can launch a successful attack. Divine sovereignty is explained in the *Bhagavad-Gita* in a language which anticipates and meets the difficulties that modern science raises against religious cosmology. According to the *Bhagavad-Gita,* the sovereignty of God is exercised in and through the unchangeable law of cause and effect, that is, through what we call the laws of nature.

"All this world is pervaded by Me in form unmanifest; all things abide in Me, but I stand apart from them. And yet beings are not rooted in Me. Behold the scheme of My sovereignty ! Myself the origin and the support of beings, yet standing apart from them. Using nature which is Mine own, I create again and again all this multitude of beings, keeping them dependent on nature. In the scheme of My sovereignty, nature brings forth the moving and the unmoving, and in consequence of this the world evolves."

A study of the Upanishads will show that Vedanta

postulates that the universe is the result of a gradual unfolding of the creative power inherent in the primordial substance. In fact it may be said that the philosophy of Hinduism anticipated the basic theories of biology and physics. The very approach to things in the Upanishads, the insistence on adherence to truth and on tireless investigation is remarkably in the nature of an anticipation of the methods of science.

Just as Vedanta appears to have anticipated science and prepared the ground for meeting the contradictions that were to appear between science and religion, so also the code of conduct and the spiritual values that were developed by Hindu seers on the basis of Vedantic philosophy seem to have fully anticipated the socio-economic problems that civilization has had subsequently to face. The profit-motive and the civic right of private competition were discarded in what was laid down as the Vedantin's way of life. This, as clearly set out in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, is that men must fulfil social duty and work according to capacity and not for profit. We are now told by social and economic reformers that the State should see to it that men and women work without aiming at personal gain and with an eye only to the welfare of the community. And this is just what the *Bhagavad-Gita* laid down. The way of life taught in this living spring of Hindu ethics is based expressly on the equal dignity and sacredness of every form of labour that falls to one's lot. All work, it reiterates with solemn emphasis, should be done honestly and disinterestedly for *lokasangraha*—welfare of the community—and not for the satisfaction of personal desires. Indeed, the *Gita* lays down in a unique manner the whole socialist doctrine by characterizing work as a religious offering in the truest sense. The performance of one's allotted task is specially described in the *Gita* as an

authorized and accepted form of worship:

"If a man is devoted to his particular duties and performs them, he wins beatitude; when a man performs his proper duty, he worships Him from Whom the world has issued and by Whom all that we see is pervaded and thereby he attains beatitude. It is better for one to do even imperfectly the duties that fall to one's lot, than to do those of others perfectly. If a man does the work that comes to him by birth, no blemish will attach to it, whatever kind of work it may be. One should not abandon one's natural duty, even if evils attach thereto; every human activity involves some evil as fire carries smoke. He whose mind is in every way detached, whose self is conquered, who has freed himself from selfish longings attains by dint of that detachment the attributes attached to worklessness."

The very specific terms in which the doctrine is enunciated that the proper performance of one's allotted task is an act of worship in the most religious sense of the term is worthy of note.

Everywhere now in the civilized world, men want a wise allotment of work to individuals as well as groups in accordance with the demands of common interest in place of personal choice or caprice. They feel they have had enough of *laissez-faire* and of the "divine" right of making unlimited private profit. If it is essential that individual efforts should be regulated and controlled in the interest of society, this vital duty cannot be left entirely to the spy and the policeman employed to keep watch over citizens. We must build up a social conscience and a cultural incentive to co-operate from within and create a spiritual yearning which makes a joy of restraint and strenuous discharge of duty. The terrors and risks and the very guilt and savagery of a violent revolution might

by a natural reaction bring into being a fanaticism that serves to back a new economic order that was brought into existence at such supreme cost and sacrifice. This fanaticism may function as a kind of spiritual incentive. But the same cannot happen when the revolution is attained by a mere Act of Parliament. The spiritual value of things depends on the price paid for them in suffering and sacrifice. An easily achieved revolution has not the same psychological virtue as one paid for in blood and tears. Where there is no backing of revolutionary fanaticism or its after-effects there must be found something else to operate as motive power. The only thing that can do this effectively is a faith that operates as a law from within and co-operate with State-imposed restraints. In Vedanta, we have a teaching rooted in immemorial tradition and associated with the sacred names and memories of a long line of seers, which can serve as the spiritual and cultural basis for a new and more just economy of life, if not all over the world, at least in India itself.

All culture in India has been rooted in Vedanta. Whatever courage, heroism, self-sacrifice or greatness is to be found in our history or seen in the lives of our people has sprung from Vedanta which is in our blood and tradition. For Vedanta is undoubtedly a living philosophy of life in India which is part of the mental structure of our people. The people of India get it not from a study of books but from tradition. It is in the air, so to say, of India and Asia. The foreigner has to get it from books and he necessarily sees so much subtlety in it that he may well swear that it is impossible that such a doctrine could ever be the actual cultural basis or living spiritual principle of the daily life of any people of modern times. Yet this is the fact in India. The greatness of Gandhiji and the strength of his movement were

entirely derived from and rooted in Vedanta. However much foreign civilization and new aspirations might have affected the people of India, this spiritual nutriment has not dried up or decayed or changed. The lives of the rich as well as of the poor, of the leisured classes as of the peasants and labourers, of the illiterate and not only of the learned, are in varying measure sweetened by the pervasive fragrance of this Indian philosophy. Paradoxical as it may seem, even communities born to avocations deemed dishonest and disreputable have evolved a code of honour of their own, and are Vedantins to the extent of sincerely respecting it This curious moral enclave in sinful lives touches the heart, and makes a great pity of what is doubtless just a matter for sheer reprobation

The Upanishads are quite large in number, but about twelve may be called the principal Upanishads and they are now available in collected book-form with fairly accurate translations. It would be a mistake to expect ancient works to be like the books of our own time The principal Upanishads were written thousands of years ago—scholars are not certain about the exact time. In India as in the rest of the world, the environment and the lives and habits of men were all very different then from what they are today. We may not forget or overlook this difference in attempting to understand and interpret the Upanishads or for that matter any book of ancient times. To interpret and judge things written more than three thousand years ago in the light of today and bring to bear on them modern doubts, discoveries and controversies would be utterly stupid. We should remember that what is now doubted or disputed was not then the subject of question or controversy. Any literature, sacred or secular, must be juxtaposed to the real life of the place and period before it can be rightly understood. We should throw

our minds back thousands of years, and try to recreate by an effort of imagination the world of the Upanishadic period—the way in which men lived and thought, and the way they disciplined themselves so that we may understand and appreciate what was said by the *rishis* or seers.

The principal teaching of all the Upanishads is this: Man cannot achieve happiness through mere physical enjoyment obtained through wealth or the goods of the world or even through the pleasures attainable by elevation to the happy realms above through the performing of sacrifices prescribed in the Vedas. The potency of these sacrifices was a matter of implicit belief in those times. Yet, the attainment of these worlds of pleasures through Vedic sacrifices is not the object of the Upanishad teaching. In fact pleasures in super-terrestrial worlds were regarded as hardly higher in real value than sensual enjoyment on earth. The *Mundakopanishad,* after a flowing description of the welcome accorded in *svarga* to the performer of sacrifices—how he is borne there on the rays of the sun and told in loving terms that he has earned the pleasures he is going to enjoy—goes on to say:

Perishable and transient are the results achieved by sacrifices. The person of small wisdom who having won them congratulates himself on having eternal bliss is caught up again in decay and death. He only enjoys the fruits of his deeds in a distinguished place in *svarga,* and when they are exhausted he returns either to his world or enters a lower one.

The only happiness worth a wise man's seeking is permanent happiness as distinguished from fleeting pleasures that are exhausted by enjoyment like a credit account in a bank either here or in the world beyond. Absolute happiness can result only from liberation and it follows

therefore that spiritual enlightenment alone, which frees the soul from all illusion, can liberate the soul by breaking the bond of *karma,* the unending chain of work and results, and unite it again to the Supreme Being, which is *moksha* (liberation).

It is necessary to point out that enlightenment does not mean learning, much or little. Indeed, enlightenment is not an intellectual state, but a state of spiritual awakening which comes through moral rebuilding. Purity of life and a mind free from selfish desires are essential for enlightenment. Without full moral self-control, no enlightenment is possible.

The path of enlightenment therefore runs through stages in which the self gets more and more purified, more and more truly freed from the longings that often seem to disappear but hide themselves only to reappear in other forms The *mantras* or verses of the Upanishads may appear in some places to conflict with one another, but these contradictions disappear when it is remembered that the whole is a process of teaching by stages All education was through oral teaching in those days The disciple lived in intimate companionship with the teacher and the scripture was little more than a mnemonic guide to the teacher and not a text-book to be kept in the students' library To the teacher as well as to the pupil, it was a help to memory, not a comprehensive treatise. The system of education when the Upanishads were composed was a highly evolved process but the medium was not, as now, the reading of books bought at bookshops or taken out of libraries This made a great difference as to the content of books and what was left for oral guidance.

Separate cults based on the worship of Shiva or of Vishnu are of no consequence in Vedanta Whatever may be the significance of the later controversies as to who is

the Supreme Being, Shiva or Vishnu, these controversies do not find a place in the Upanishads Vedanta has indeed no place for such disputes. Vedanta is not mere philosophy. It is both philosophy and religion. Yet there is no controversy in it about forms of worship Vedanta is the common heritage of the people of India in whatever denomination they may happen to have been brought up. In his treatises, Shankara, the great Vedantin, uses the word Narayana to indicate the Supreme Being. Others in their books give to the Supreme Being the name of Shiva. Names and images, whether mental or sculptured, even the sacred and mystic syllable *OM* itself, are but crutches to help the faltering feet of infirm faith on the way to realization —mere aids to concentration, and protection against doubts and distractions The Shaiva-Siddhanta philosophy wherein Shiva is the Supreme Being is not different from the Vedanta taught by Ramanuja who treats Hari as the Supreme Being. The worshipper of Shiva or Hari may emphatically say that either the one or the other is the Supreme Spirit and every other God is but His manifestation for the time being and for the particular function, but names do not matter Indeed, Jehovah, Allah and the God of the New Testament may well be made the central name-piece of the teaching of the Upanishads and the sense of it would remain unaltered. Pious men of all religions should indeed study the Upanishads and the *Gitā* in that very manner, to whatever faith they may belong, only substituting their accustomed name wherever the Supreme Being is referred to. This really means that the Upanishads contain the quintessence of all faiths in which the divine thirst of all the souls for the nectar of immortality has found expression. They contain the answer to the yearning appeal—

From appearance lead me to Reality.
From darkness lead me to Light.
From death lead me to Immortality.

The tradition in Hinduism is that it is not open to any Hindu, whatever be the name and mental image of the Supreme Being he uses for his devotional exercises, to deny the existence of the God that others worship. He can raise the name of his choice to that of the highest but he cannot deny the divinity or the truth of the God of other denominations. The fervour of his own piety just gives predominance to the name and form he keeps for his own worship and contemplation, and he treats the others as Gods deriving divinity therefrom. This reduces all controversy to a devotional technique of concentration on a particular name and mental form or concrete symbol as representing the Supreme Being. It makes no difference in the content of Vedanta to which all devotees equally subscribe.

Devotees of other gods who worship them
With true sincerity really worship Me,
Though not in the regular way.

Bhagavad-Gita.

Just as all water raining from the
Skies goes to the ocean, worship of all
Gods goes to Keshava.

Mahabharata.

XI

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

The importance of the *Gita* in Indian Thought:—The *Bhagavad Gita* which forms part of the Bhishma *parva* of the *Mahabharata* is the most popular religious poem of Sanskrit literature. It is said to be "the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue." It is a book conveying lessons of philosophy, religion and ethics. It is not looked upon as a *shruti*, or a revealed scripture, but is regarded as a *smriti*, or a tradition. Yet if the hold which a work has on the mind of man is any clue to its importance, then the *Gita* is the most influential work in Indian thought. Its message of deliverance is simple. While only the rich could buy off the gods by their sacrifices, and only the cultured could pursue the way of knowledge, the *Gita* teaches a method which is within the reach of all, that of *bhakti*, or devotion to God. The poet makes the teacher the very God descended into humanity. He is supposed to address Arjuna, the representative man, at a great crisis in his life. Arjuna comes to the battle-field, convinced of the righteousness of his cause and prepared to fight the enemy. At the psychological moment he shrinks from his duty. His conscience is troubled, his heart is torn with anguish and his state of mind, "like to a little kingdom, suffers then the nature of an insurrection." If to slay is to sin, it is a worse sin to slay those to whom we owe love and

worship. Arjuna typifies the struggling individual who feels the burden and the mystery of the world. He has not yet built within himself a strong centre of spirit from which he can know not only the unreality of his own desires and passions, but also the true status of the world opposing him. The despondency of Arjuna is not the passing mood of a disappointed man, but is the feeling of a void, a sort of deadness felt in the heart, exciting a sense of the unreality of things. Arjuna is ready to repudiate his life if necessary. He does not, however, know what is right for him to do. He is faced by a terrible temptation and passes through an intense inward agony. His cry is a simple yet tremendous one, significant of the tragedy of man, which all who can see beyond the actual drama of the hour can recognise. The mood of despair in which Arjuna is found in the first chapter of the *Gita* is what the mystics call the dark night of the soul, an essential step in the upward path. The further stages of illumination and realisation are found in the course of the dialogue. From the second chapter onwards we have a philosophical analysis. The essential thing in man is not the body or the senses, but the changeless spirit. The mind of Arjuna is switched on to a new path. The life of the soul is symbolised by the battle-field of Kurukshetra, and the Kauravas are the enemies who impede the progress of the soul. Arjuna attempts to recapture the kingdom of man by resisting the temptations and controlling the passions. The path of progress is through suffering and self-abnegation. Arjuna tries to evade the rigorous ordeal by subtle arguments and specious excuses. Krishna stands for the voice of God, delivering his message in thrilling notes, warning Arjuna against dejection of spirit. The opening chapter shows great insight into the heart of man, its conflict of motives, the force of selfishness and the

subtle whisperings of the Evil One. As the dialogue proceeds the dramatic element disappears. The echoes of the battle-field die away, and we have only an interview between God and Man. The chariot of war becomes the lonely cell of meditation, and a corner of the battle-field where the voices of the world are stilled, a fit place for thoughts on the Supreme.

The teacher is the favourite god of India, who is at once human and divine. He is the god of beauty and love, whom his devotees enthrone on the wings of birds, on the petals of flowers, on whatever they most delight in of all that lives on earth. The poet vividly imagines how an incarnate God would speak of Himself. There is support for the poet's device to make Krishna say that he was Brahman. In the *Vedanta Sutras* (1, 1, 30), the Vedic passage where Indra declares himself to be Brahman is explained on the hypothesis that Indra is only referring to the philosophical truth that the Atman in man is one with the Supreme Brahman. When Indra says "Worship me," he means "Worship the God I worship" On a similar principle Vamadeva's declaration that he is Manu and Surya is explained. Besides, the *Gita* teaches that an individual freed from passion and fear and purified by the fire of wisdom attains to the state of God. Krishna of the *Gita* stands for the infinite in the finite, the God in man concealed within the folds of flesh and the powers of sense.

The message of the *Gita* is universal in its scope. It is the philosophical basis of popular Hinduism. The author is a man of deep culture, catholic rather than critical. He does not lead a missionary movement; he addresses no sect, establishes no school, but opens the way to all the winds that blow. He sympathises with all forms of worship, and is therefore well fitted for the task of interpreting the spirit of Hinduism which is unwilling to break up

culture into compartments and treat other forms of thought and practices in a spirit of negation. The *Gita* appeals to us not only by its force of thought and majesty of vision, but also by its fervour of devotion and sweetness of spiritual emotion. Though the *Gita* did much to develop spiritual worship and undermine inhuman practices, still on account of its non-critical attitude it did not destroy altogether false modes of worship.

The tone of the *Gita* is dogmatic, and its author does not suspect that it is possible for him to err. He gives the truth as he sees it, and he seems to see it in its entirety and many-sidedness, and to believe in its saving power. "In the *Gita* there is a sage that speaks in the fullness and enthusiasm of his knowledge and of his feelings and not a philosopher brought up in any school who divides his material in conformity to a settled method and arrive at the last steps of his doctrines through the clue of a set of systematic ideas." The *Gita* stands midway between a philosophical system and a poetic inspiration. We do not have here the illimitable suggestiveness of the Upanishads, since it is a deliberately intellectual solution of the problem of life. It is designed to meet a situation complicated by troubles of conscience and confusion of mind.

The main spirit of the *Gita* is that of the Upanishads; only there is a greater emphasis on the religious side. The thin abstractions of the Upanishads could not satisfy the many-sided needs of the soul. The other attempts to solve the secret of life were more theistic in their texture. The author of the *Gita* found that men could not be made to love logic. So he took his stand on the Upanishads, drew out their religious implications, galvanised them into a living system by incorporating with them popular mythology and national imagination.

Relation to other Systems:—Almost all the views

which prevailed in the age influenced the author of the *Gita,* who brings to a focus the rays of religious light cast at random in the world about him. It is necessary for us to note the exact relations between the *Gita* on the one hand and the Vedas, the Upanishads, Buddhism, the Bhagavata religion and the systems of Sankhya and Yoga on the other.

The *Gita* does not throw overboard the authority of the Vedas. It considers the Vedic injunctions to be quite valid for men of a particular cultural status One cannot attain perfection, according to the *Gita*, without obeying the ordinances of the Vedas. Sacrificial acts are required to be performed without any expectation of reward. After a particular stage, the performance of Vedic rites tends to become an obstacle to the attainment of supreme perfection. The exalted character of the Vedic gods is not accepted. Though the Vedic observances secure for us power and wealth, they do not take us straight to freedom. Deliverance can be found by the discovery of self. When the secret of salvation is in our possession there is no need for the performance of Vedic *karmas*. .

The philosophic background of the *Gita* is taken from the Upanishads. Some verses are common to the Upanishads and the *Gita.* The discussion of Kshetra and Kshetrajna, Kshara and Akshara are based on the Upanishads. The account of the Supreme Reality is also derived from the same source. *Bhakti* is a direct development of the *upasana* of the Upanishads. The love for the Supreme involves the giving up of all else. "What shall we do with progeny, when we have got this being, this world to live in?" Ideas of devotion to the Supreme, the conquest of self and the attainment of a condition of peace and serenity are in the atmosphere of the period. Disinterested work is defended even in the Upanishads. That non-attach-

ment results from an elevated state of mind is brought out in the Upanishads. The practical and the religious tendencies of the Upanishads are so developed as not to supersede the teachings of earlier thinkers. The cold flawless perfection was no doubt a magnificent explanation of the world, but it was not quite suited to be a transforming power of life. The vogue of the Bhagavata religion inclined the author of the *Gita* to give a glow and a penetrating power to the Absolute of the Upanishads. He made it into a personal Ishvara, called by the different names of Shiva, Vishnu, etc All the same, the author is aware that he is only reviving a dead past and not propounding a new theory. "This imperishable *yoga* I declared to Vivasvat, and he taught it to Manu, Manu to Ikshvaku" (iv, 1-3), and this secret is now revealed to Arjuna by Krishna. This passage indicates that the message of the *Gita* is the ancient wisdom taught by Vishvamitra, the seer of *Gayatri*, and the *rishi* of the third cycle of the *Rig-Veda* and Rama, Krishna, Gautama Buddha, and other teachers of the Solar line. The full name of the *Gita*, as it is evident from the colophon at the end of each chapter, is the *Upanishad of the name of the Bhagavad-Gita*. The traditional account of the relation between the *Gita* and the Upanishads is contained in the passage now almost too familiar for quotation, that "the Upanishads are the cows, Krishna is the milker, Arjuna the calf, and the nectar-like *Gita* is the excellent milk."

The Bhagavata religion was the immediate stimulus to the synthesis of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is actually suggested that the teaching of the *Gita* is identical with the doctrine of the Bhagavatas. It is sometimes called the *Hari-Gita*.

There is no mention of Buddhism, though some of the views of the *Gita* are like those of Buddhism Both protest

against the absolute authority of the Vedas and attempt to relax the rigours of caste by basing it on a less untenable foundation. Both are the manifestations of the same spiritual upheaval which shook the ritualistic religion, though the *Gita* was the more conservative, and therefore less thorough-going protest Buddha announced the golden mean, though his own teaching was not quite true to it. To prefer celibacy to marriage, fasting to feasting, is not to practise the golden mean The *Gita* denounces the religious madness of the hermits and the spiritual suicide of saints who prefer darkness to daylight and sorrow to joy. It is possible to attain salvation without resorting to the cult of narrowness and death The word *nirvana* occurs in the *Gita*, but this does not show any borrowing from Buddhism, since it is not peculiar to it. In the descriptions of the ideal man the *Gita* and Buddhism agree. As a philosophy and religion, the *Gita* is more complete than Buddhism, which emphasises overmuch the negative side. The *Gita* adopts the ethical principles of Buddhism, while it by implication condemns the negative metaphysics of Buddhism as the root of all unbelief and error. It is more in continuity with the past, and therefore had a better fortune than Buddhism in India.

According to Garbe, "the teachings of the Sankhya-Yoga constitute almost entirely the foundation of the philosophical observations of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In comparison with them the Vedanta takes a second place. Sankhya and Yoga are often mentioned by name, while the Vedanta appears only once (*Vedantakrit*, xv. 15), and then in the sense of Upanishad or treatise. Accordingly, when we think merely of the role which the philosophical systems play in the *Gita* as it has been handed down to us, and when we consider the irreconcilable contradictions between the Sankhya-Yoga and the Vedanta, which can

only be done away with by carefully distinguishing between the old and the new, the Vedantic constituents of the *Bhagavad-Gita* prove not to belong to the original poem. Whether we investigate the *Gita* from the religious or the philosophical side, the same result is reached." The terms Sankhya-Yoga when they occur in the *Gita* do not represent the classical schools of Sankhya and Yoga, but only the reflective and the meditative methods of gaining salvation. Besides, during the period of the *Gita* there was no clear-cut distinction between the Sankhya-Yoga on one side and the Vedanta on the other, which alone can justify Garbe's interpretation. Fitz-Edward Hall is more correct when he says: "In the Upanishads, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and other ancient Hindu books, we encounter, in combination, the doctrine, which after having been subjected to modifications that rendered them as wholly irreconcilable, were distinguished at an uncertain period into what have for many ages been styled the Sankhya and the Vedanta." The psychology and the order of the creation of the Sankhya are accepted by the *Gita,* though the metaphysical implications of the Sankhya are rejected by it. Kapila's name is mentioned, though not that of Patanjali. We cannot, however, be sure that this Kapila is the founder of the Sankhya system. Even if it be so, it does not follow that the system in all its details was elaborated by that time. The terms *buddhi* or understanding, *ahankara* or self-sense, and *manas* or mind, occur, though not always in their Sankhya significations. The same is true of *prakriti.* While the Sankhya deliberately avoids the question of the existence of God, the *Gita* is most anxious to establish it.

Though the distinction between *purusha* and *prakriti* is recognised, the dualism is overcome. *Purusha* is not an independent element, but only a *prakriti* or form of God.

The psychical intelligence is the higher nature. When we deal with the Sankhya system we shall see how it looks upon all the modes of *prakriti* or nature as phenomena implying a permanent subject to whom they appear and for whom they exist. Though *prakriti* or nature is unconscious, its activities are purposive, meant as they are for the freedom of the soul. The teleological character of its activities is not in accord with its alleged unconsciousness. In the *Gita* the difficulty is overcome There is a spiritual fact behind the play of *prakriti* or nature. *Purusha* or soul is not the independent reality which it is in the *Sankhya* system. Its nature is not mere awareness, but bliss also. The *Gita* does not recognise any ultimate distinctness of individual souls It also believes in the existence of an Uttamapurusha, or Supreme Soul. Yet the character of the individual soul and its relation to nature as given in the *Bhagavad-Gita* show the influence of the Sankhya theory. *Purusha* is the spectator, and not the actor. *Prakriti* does everything He who thinks "I act" is mistaken. To realise the separateness of *purusha* from *prakriti,* soul from nature, is the end of life The theory of the *gunas* or qualities is accepted "There is no entity on earth or heaven among the *devas* that is free from the three qualities born of *prakriti*" (xviii 40, xiv 5) The *gunas* constitute the triple cord of bondage So long as we are subject to them we have to wander in the circuit of existence. Freedom is deliverance from the *gunas.* The physiological account of the internal organs and the senses is found here as in the Sankhya.

The *Gita* refers to yoga practices also. When Arjuna asks Krishna as to how mind, which is admittedly fickle and boisterous, can be brought under control, Krishna answers by saying that *abhyasa*, or practice, and *vairagya,*

or indifference to worldly objects, should be acquired. (vi.33-34).

The Teaching of the Gita.—At the time of the *Gita* many different views about ultimate reality and man's destiny prevailed. There were the Upanishad traditions based on the intuition of the soul, the Sankhya doctrine that liberation can be obtained by freeing oneself from contact with nature, the Karma Mimamsa view that by fulfilling our duties we attain perfection, the way of devotional feeling which holds that by attaining exaltation of the heart, the gladness of freedom can be obtained, and the Yoga system, which declares that man is free when the quiet life of the soul takes the place of the vari-coloured light of the world. The Supreme Spirit is viewed either as an impersonal Absolute or a personal Lord. The *Gita* attempts to synthesise the heterogeneous elements and fuse them all into a single whole. That is why we find in it apparently conflicting views about the end of freedom and the means of discipline. Finding that the *Gita* is not a consistent piece of doctrine, different writers try to account for it in different ways. Garbe and Hopkins suppose that several writers in different centuries have been at work upon it. According to Garbe the original *Gita* was written in the second century B.C. as a theistic tract, based on the Sankhya-Yoga, though in the second century A.D. it was adapted by the upholders of the Upanishad monism. "These two doctrines— the theistic and the pantheistic— are mixed up with each other, and follow each other, sometimes quite unconnected and sometimes loosely connected. And it is not the case that the one is represented as a lower esoteric and the other as the higher esoteric doctrine. It is nowhere taught that theism is a preliminary step to the knowledge of the reality or that it is

its symbol, and that the pantheism of the Vedanta is the ultimate reality itself; but the two beliefs are treated of almost throughout as though there was indeed no difference between them, either verbal or real.'' Hopkins makes the *Gita* a Krishnaite version of a Vishnuite poem, which was itself a late Upanishad Keith believes that it was originally an Upanishad of the type of the *Shvetashvatara*, but was later adapted to the cult of Krishna Holtzmann looks upon it as a Vishnuite remodelling of a pantheistic poem. Barnett thinks that different streams of tradition became confused in the mind of the author. Deussen makes it a late product of the degeneration of the monistic thought of the Upanishads, belonging to a period of transition from theism to realistic atheism

There is no need to accept any of these conjectures. The *Gita* is an application of the Upanishad ideal to the new situations which arose at the time of the *Mahabharata*. In adapting the idealism of the Upanishads to a theistically minded people, it attempts to derive a religion from the Upanishad philosophy. It shows that the reflective spiritual idealism of the Upanishads has room for the living warm religion of personal devotion The Absolute of the Upanishads is revealed as the fulfilment of the reflective and the emotional demands of human nature This change of emphasis from the speculative to the practical, from the philosophical to the religious, is also to be found in the later Upanishads, where we have the Saviour responding to the cry of faith The *Gita* attempts a spiritual synthesis which could support life and conduct on the basis of the Upanishad truth, which it carries into the life-blood of the Indian people

The question whether the *Gita* succeeds in gathering up the different tendencies of thought into a true whole remains to be answered in the course of our study. The

Indian tradition has always felt that incongruous elements are fused together in it, while the Western scholar has persisted that the brilliant fragments refuse to coalesce even in the skilled hands of the author. There is no use of dogmatising in the very premises of the discussion.

The context in which the *Gita* is said to be delivered, points out how its central purpose is to solve the problem of life and stimulate right conduct. It is obviously an ethical treatise, a *yoga shastra.* The *Gita* was formulated in a period of ethical religion and so shared in the feeling of the age. Whatever peculiar adaptations the term *yoga* may have in the *Gita*, it throughout keeps up its practical reference. Yoga is getting to God, relating oneself to the power that rules the universe, touching the Absolute. It is *yoking* not this or that power of the soul, but all the forces of heart, mind and will to God. It is the effort of man to unite himself to the deeper principle. We have to change the whole poise of the soul into something absolute and uncompromising and develop the strength to resist power and pleasure. Yoga thus comes to mean the discipline by which we can train ourselves to bear the shocks of the world with the central being of our soul untouched. It is the method or the instrument, *upaya,* by which the end can be gained. Patanjali's *yoga* is a system of psychic discipline by which we can clear the intellect, free the mind of its illusions and get a direct perception of reality. We can also perceive the divine in the nature of our being, watch it with ardent love and aspiration, till the spark grows into an infinite light. All these are different *yogas* or methods leading to the one supreme yoga or union with God. But no ethical message can be sustained if it is not backed up by a metaphysical statement. So the *yoga shastra* of the *Gita* is rooted in *brahmavidya*, or knowledge of the spirit. The

Gita is a system of speculation as well as a rule of life, an intellectual search for truth as well as an attempt to make the truth dynamic in the soul of man This is evident from the colophon at the end of each chapter, which has come down to us from a date which is unknown, that it is the *yoga shastra,* or religious discipline of the philosophy of Brahman, "*brahmavidyayam yogashastre*"

XII

THE WEB OF LIFE

INDIA is the heart of Asia. Hinduism is a convenient name for the nexus of Indian thought. It would appear that it takes some thousand to fifteen hundred years to work out a single rhythm of its great pulsation For this is about the period that divides the war of the *Mahabharata* from Buddha, Buddha from Shankaracharya, and Shankaracharya from Ramakrishna, in whom the immense pile reaches the crowning self consciousness Of the long prehistoric evolution that went to the building up of Mahabharata, Great India, the heroic age, we can say little, for nothing is left to us, save the legend of Sita and Rama, out of the night of time Yet we know that this period must have been long. Three thousand years seems not too much, if enough, to allow. Behind this again loom up the millennia spent on the tableland of Central Asia, that head-water of world-civilization where Aryan man entered the patriarchate, and closed the account of his first combat with Nature, having tamed the beasts, learned the use of tools, domesticated corn and fire, produced the fruit-trees, and divided the week. Of the sublime dreams, the poetry and song with which he consoled himself during those ages of Herculean struggle, the fragments known as the *Rig-Veda* still remain. And we learn therein how broad was his outlook upon Nature, even as that of the mind that declared "and the evening and the morning were the first

day." How long did it last? Was it ten thousand years? Were there another five thousand before the war of *Mahabharata?* However this be, the enthusiasm of succeeding periods strikes us as extraordinary

There is no question that the characteristic product of the civilization that succeeded the Great War was the forest universities, notes of whose sessions have become the *sutras* and Upanishads But we must not forget also that during the same period the Vedas were written down, and the searching scrutiny of society initiated which was later to result in the [illegible] accumulations of reverent and sympathetic interpretations now known to us as the Laws of Manu

It is only with difficulty that we realise the sense of vastness to which the thinkers of this period strove to give expression The Celt, it has been said, strives ever towards the infinite of emotion The Hindu in the same way, cannot rest content, short of the infinite of thought We see this, even so early as the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* "When darkness was hidden in darkness, undistinguished, like one mass of water," opens the great Anthem of Creation Still larger is the sweep of the Upanishads—"they that see the Real in the midst of this Unreal, they that behold life in the midst of this death, they that know the One in all the changing manifoldness of this universe unto them belongs eternal peace —unto none else, unto none else" The Vedas were the capital with which Aryan culture began its occupation of India, and these immense and subtle generalisations of the Upanishads represent the first achievement of the national mind in its new place Surely this is the secret of the striking fact in Indian history that all great eras of rejuvenescence, such as Shankaracharya's and even minor movements of reconstruction like Guru Nanak's, and Ramanuja's have had to go back to the forest *sutras* and

place themselves in structural continuity with them. In this light we begin to suspect that the war of the *Mahabharata* itself represents the apparent exhaustion of Vedic inspiration at the end of the first period, and the restoration of pristine vigour by force of Krishna's personality.

The twilight of Indian forests in the pre-Buddhistic age is resonant, to the historic ear, with chants and prayers. But the succeeding epoch leads us into the busy life of villages and cities. For the ballads and songs of the people are crystallising now into the great Epics. Their religious activity—stirred by the sublime spectacle of a life that represents the whole of Upanishadic culture, the national dream in its completeness—occupies itself with gathering together, and weaving into a whole, all the religious ideas innate amongst the masses, and those peculiar to the Indian environment. There is a sudden accession of force given to such practices as pilgrimage and relic-worship, and Brahmin intelligence is more or less unconsciously preoccupied with the interpretation of images, symbols, and rituals, in relation to those truths which had been the first realisation of the race. The distinction and larger scope of this Buddhist period lay to a great extent in its political, commercial, and sub-religious elements, in letters, arts, and sciences.

Certain evils must have come in the train of the ideas then elaborated, essential as they were to prove themselves in the long run to the completed fabric of Hinduism. We can understand that monastic notions may have attracted too much of the national energy out of the safe paths of domestic virtue, with a tendency to bring about not only the depletion of family life, but the disintegration of morality itself. No doubt it was at this time, and to meet this error, that the song of the ideal sang itself so clearly, first through the lips of Kalidasa, in his *Birth of the War-*

Lord, and again, in the final recension of *Ramayana,* as the love of Sita for Rama, that glorified wifehood, before which the renunciation and faith of the cloister grow pale.

From the point of view of purity of doctrine, we can believe, too, that the very breadth of the welcome extended to religious ideas of all kinds, especially in the closing centuries of this age, had led to the undue emphasising of the popular notions, to the inclusion of an unnecessary multiplicity of symbols, and possibly to the interpretation of symbols already existing in rude or gross ways.

But agitation against abuses has never been the method of Hinduism. Rather has the faith progressed by lifting repeatedly in moments of crisis the banner of the highest ideal. Already, in the era we are considering, this organic law of the national genius, the law of the avatars, was well known. "Whenever the dharma decays, and when that which is not dharma prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of the national righteousness, I am born again and again." So says the *Bhagavad-Gita* —and never was any prophecy more conclusively vindicated than this, by the appearance of Shankaracharya, early in the ninth century after Christ.

This wonderful boy—for he died at the age of thirty-two—was born at the end of the eighth century, and had already completed a great mission when most men were still dreaming of the future. The characteristic product of Oriental culture is always a commentary. By this form of literature the future is knit firmly to the past, and though the dynamic power of the connecting idea may be obscure to the foreigner, it is clearly and accurately conveyed to the Eastern mind itself. The whole of Confucianism is contained in a commentary on the *Eking,* or Book of Change, and European Protestantism might

almost be described as a special kind of commentary on the Christian sacred literature. The Sanskrit *sutras* lend themselves to critical writing, and even demand it, in a special degree : for the word *sutra* means thread, and is applied to works which are only the main line of a given argument, and require expansion at the end of every sentence. This literary convention obtains in all Oriental countries, and must date from the period when the main function of writing was to assist memorising. Obviously, by writing a new commentary on a given *sutra,* the man of genius has it in his power to readjust the relationship between a given question and the whole of current opinion. Hence it is not surprising to find that the masterpiece of Shankaracharya's life was a commentary on the *Vedanta-Sutra.*

The problems which faced the Indian mind during his lifetime, with the single exception that the country was then rich and prosperous, must have been curiously like those of the present day, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in his eyes they assumed national dimensions. Religious practices had lost their primitive simplicity, and also perhaps their compelling power. Ideas as to national and unnational (for the word " orthodox " was but the Asiatic word for " National ") were conflicting and confused. Men lived much in the thought of the recent sectarian developments of the faith, and tended to lose sight of its austere imperative, pointing to the highest realisation, of its antiquity, and its close-knit continuity. Lakshmi, Goddess of Fortune, was one of the chief objects of worship. Sects and kingdoms alike had lost their sense of mutual solidarity. Never perhaps was an Asiatic people nearer precipitating itself on a purely secular development.

At this moment the whole of the national genius

awoke once more in Shankaracharya. Amidst all the brilliance and luxury of the age, in spite of the rich and florid taste of the Puranic period, his soul caught the mystic whisper of the ancient rhythm of the Vedic chants, and the dynamic power of the faith to lead the soul to super-consciousness, became for him the secret of every phase of Hinduism. He was on fire with the love of the Vedas. His own poems have something of their classical beauty and vigour, and his books may almost be described as chains of quotations from the most piercing and comprehensive scriptures of the Upanishads, to which he has contributed links and rivets.

Shankaracharya wandered, during his short life, from his birthplace in the South as far as the Himalayas, and everything that he came across in his travels related itself to the one focus and centre, in his mind. He accepted each worship, even that from which he was at first adverse, but always because he found that the great mood of One-without-a-second was not only the Vedic, but also the Puranic goal. This is the doctrine that he expresses in his twelve epoch-making commentaries, especially in his crowning work, the commentary on the *Vedanta-Sutra.* And this idea, known as the Advaita Philosophy, constitutes, for the rest of the Hindu period, the actual unity of India.

Western people can hardly imagine a personality such as that of Shankaracharya. In the course of so few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders, of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present day ; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy, and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake ; to have written poems whose grandeur makes

them unmistakable, even to the foreign and unlearned ear ; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant joy and simple pathos of the saints—this is greatness that we may appreciate, but cannot understand. We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assisi, the intellect of Abelard, the force and freedom of Martin Luther, and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola ; but who could imagine all these united in one person ?

Subsequent critics have painted Shankaracharya as the persecutor of Buddhists. Inasmuch as he asserted a co-ordination of mythologies and doctrines, instead of preaching a single exclusive method of salvation ; inasmuch as to him the goal was a positive, and not a negative affirmation, and in so far also as he insisted upon the worthlessness of ritual apart from philosophy, of worship without illumination, he may be taken as the enemy of one school or another. It is almost unnecessary to add that this enmity was purely controversial in its character, and to Buddhists of the Northern school, a clearer historic knowledge will reveal him as the very opposite of a persecutor, as, rather, another example of the race of inspired religious teachers to which their own apostle, Nagarjuna, belonged.

Buddhism as a whole, with the succeeding Puranism, had been the creation of the lay mind, the creation of the people. The work of Shankaracharya was the relinking of popular practice to the theory of Brahman, the stern infusion of mythological fancies with the doctrine of the Upanishads. He took up and defined the current catch-words—*maya, karma,* reincarnation, and others—and left the terminology of Hinduism what it is today. At the same time, we must not neglect to remind ourselves that in all this, if he had been other than the expression of

that which it was the actual tendency of the race to formulate, he would not have found the scope he did. The recognition of a great man is as essential a factor in his history as his own power and character. His complete appropriation by his nation only shows that he is in perfect unison with its thought and aspiration.

The two or three centuries immediately succeeding Shankaracharya are commonly known as the dark ages of Indian history. The application of the term is obscure. In what sense were these ages dark ? They were centuries of chivalric dominance, and in many a Rajput line the bardic annals are still preserved that will one day enable a generation of Indian historians to read their record. Even the wars of such a period were never destructive ; for, apart from their specially chivalrous character, Oriental military usage has always secured the safety of non-combatants. The lives of water-carriers and commissariat servants were scrupulously respected in Asiatic warfare. It is said, indeed, that the European gipsy is an example of this These poor people were originally a tribe of petty merchants who used to accompany the march of armies. Wherever the camp was pitched, they could run up a bazaar in half an hour, and their caste-honour lay in telling neither side the secrets of the other When Genghis Khan invaded Hungary, these particular clans were carried there, never to return.

But it was not only camp-followers who were protected by a law such as that which now defends the Red Cross Sisterhoods of Europe. A like consideration prevailed, with regard to the peasant working in the fields, and the craftsman toiling at his anvil. The young crops were honoured in ancient combat, as would be Cologne Cathedral or Notre Dame de Paris in modern. Under these

circumstances a battle became only a deadly form of tournament, involving in its peril none but fighting men.

But if such contests could not become destructive, neither could they succeed in educating the masses of the people to the common duty of military defence. This result could only be achieved when a religious idea should become the war-cry of whole regions, conferring on all men the right of struggle without distinction of caste. This right, so necessary to the completion of nationality, the Mohammedan invasion gave, and it is difficult to imagine any other way in which the lesson could have been widely learnt.

The great tide of vigour that emanated from Shankaracharya swept round India by south, west, and north, in a spiral curve. Ramanuja, Madhavacharya, Ram Das and Tukaram, the Sikh Gurus and Gauranga, were all in turn its products. Wherever it touched the Muslim consciousness, it created, chiefly by means of contest, a well-centred nation. Where it did not come in contact with Mohammedanism, as in the extreme south, the spiritual energy did not succeed in evoking a nationality. And where it did not lead to definite fighting, as in Bengal under Chaitanya, the sense of national existence remained more or less potential Thus the advent of Islam into India during the post-Shankaracharyan period cannot be regarded as a revolutionary invasion, inasmuch as under the new power there was not loss of Asiatic modes. New arts of luxury were introduced, but the general economic system remained undisturbed. India received a more centralised government than had been possible since the Asokan Empire, but no new forces came into operation, tending to reduce her own children to the position of agricultural serfs or tenants. And we have seen that even the wars which arose between contiguous populations of Hindus and

Mohammedans must be regarded rather as those athletic contests between brothers and cousins which confer individuality, than as conquests on the one side or the other. The victor after victory attempts neither to exclude his rival's creed from office, nor to create invidious distinctions. "The great bankers and nobles of Bengal remained Hindu under the rule of the Nawabs, as naturally as the Mussulman maintained his face in the shadow of Hindu throne."

Nor have the clearness and self-consciousness that its definition has added to Hinduism in any way tended to impair its inclusiveness. For the personality that the nineteenth century has revealed as the turning-point of the national development is that of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, whose name stands as another word for the synthesis of all possible ideals and all possible shades of thought. In this great life, Hinduism finds the philosophy of Shankaracharya clothed upon with flesh, and is made finally aware of the entire sufficiency of any single creed or conception to lead the soul to God as its true goal. Henceforth, it is not true that each form of life or worship is tolerated or understood by the Hindu mind; each form is justified, welcomed, set up for its passionate loving, for evermore. Henceforth, the supreme crime for the follower of any Indian sect, whether orthodox or modern, philosophic or popular, shall be the criticism of any other, as if it were without the bounds of "the Eternal Faith". "Man proceeds from truth to truth, and not from error to truth", becomes in future the formula that constitutes belief.

At this point we could almost have prophesied, had it not already happened, that some great disciple of this master would declare, on behalf of the whole nation, that the final differentia of Hinduism lay in the acceptance of

the doctrine of the Ishta Devata, i.e., the right of every man to choose his own creed, and of none to force the same choice on any other.

At last, then, Indian thought stands revealed in its entirety—no sect, but a synthesis; no church, but a university of spiritual culture—as an idea of individual freedom, amongst the most complete that the world knows. Certain conceptions, such as *maya, karma,* and reincarnation, popularised by Buddhism, and *mukti* or the beatific vision, sown broadcast alike by Shankaracharya and the Sufis, are characteristic of large areas But they are nowhere and in no sense regarded as essential For it is as foreign to the genius of Hinduism to require an oath of conformity to any given religious tenet whatever, as it would be to the habits of an Oxford don to require adherence to the doctrines of Plato as against those of Aristotle It would thus appear that the reforming sects of the Mohammedan period and of the nineteenth century itself, have to the full as good a right to call themselves Hindu as the most orthodox priest of Shiva, or the most learned Sanskrit pundit.

We have seen then, that it is certainly a mistake to read the history of India at any time as the account of a struggle between Hindu and Mohammedan thought, though it is a mistake which is perhaps inseparable from the European conception of the influence of faith on politics. But it cannot, on the other hand, be too clearly understood that the problem which the Indian idea has had to face, during the period between Shankaracharya and the nineteenth century, was the inclusion of the Mohammedan element in a completed nationality. From the nineteenth century onwards, it becomes the realisation of that single united nationality, amidst the vast complexity which has been the growth of ages.

It is said that nations and systems of culture fulfil special functions, as organs of humanity just as individuals fulfil special uses in the community. If this be so, it would almost appear that within the bounds of India lies one of the focal or polar points of the race. The great task of the reconciliation of opposites would seem to devolve on the peoples within this pale. It is not enough that the Mussulman should inhabit the pastoral belt, the Mongolian rest secure behind Thian Shan, and the Aryan and Dravidian dwell peacefully side by side in the southern peninsula. It was decreed from the beginning, it lay unavoidably in the very nature of things, that sooner or later all these should meet in the land of the Indus, and learn their mutual significance and responsibilities. Buddhism may be regarded in one aspect as simply the synthesis of Eastern Asia. Neo-Hinduism (to borrow a term which has been coined in no friendly spirit) is equally indicative of a place found in Aryan thought for Semitic formulae, and who shall say what is yet to be born of that conjunction between all these, in which Asia shall find herself to be—not, as she has so long been told, "merely a congeries of geographical fragments", still less a concert of rival political units, held in mechanical combination by a due admixture of mutual hopes and recriminations, but a single immense organism, filled with the tide of one strong pulsating life from end to end, firm-rooted in the soil of common origins and common modes? The value which we may attach to the prospect of this future will depend on the idea that we have already been able to form, of the place of Asia in the evolution of humanity, but to those who foresee a future moralisation of international relations it may well appear that this question is among the most important in the world.

SECTION III

RELIGION

XIII

LIFE OF BUDDHA

THE Buddha as a Man: We may now attempt an estimate of the greatness of the Buddha as a man, and not as the founder of a religion followed by more than a fifth of the human race. We can make an estimate of that greatness on the basis of some of the sayings attributed to him, or anecdotes told about him in the texts compiled after his death

Stages in His Life: The Buddha was married at sixteen. His only son was born after more than twelve years of married life. He renounced the world when he was enjoying it most, at twenty-nine. He spent six years in a life of uttermost austerities, achieving Buddhahood or Enlightenment at thirty-five. From thirty-five up to his death at eighty, for a period of forty-five years, he gave himself completely to active social service and ministry.

Initial Weaknesses: The Buddha, like the lotus, blossomed into perfection out of the ordinary conditions of life. He was not initially above the ills which flesh is heir to. He did not, like ordinary men, find renunciation and asceticism at all easy. He himself confessed: "I also, ye monks, before I had attained Enlightenment...myself subject to birth, growth and decay, sickness and death, pain and impurity, sought after what also is subject to these, viz. wife and children, slaves, male and female, goats and sheep, fowls and swine, elephants, cattle, horses, mares,

gold and silver!... How if I seek the birthless, ageless, diseaseless, deathless, and the stainless incomparable surety, the extinction of illusion! And, ye monks, after some time, while still in my first bloom, shining, dark-haired, in the enjoyment of happy youth, in the first years of manhood, against the wish of weeping and wailing parents, with shorn hair and beard, clothed in ragged raiment, I went forth from home to homelessness." And again: "Before my full Awakening, I clearly perceived the wretchedness of desires but not finding happiness or aught better outside of desires and evil things, I knew not to turn away from following after them".

Mendicant's Meal: His first meal as mendicant he could hardly eat "His stomach turned and he felt as if his inwards were on the point of coming out by his mouth, for in that existence he had never before so much as seen such fare," till by self-admonition he overcame his feeling of "distress at that repulsive food"

Fear of Solitude: His next problem in this new life was its solitude and the fear of it. He himself thus describes it: "How hard to live the life of the lonely forest-dweller.. to rejoice in solitude Verily, the silent groves must bear heavy upon the monk who has not yet won to fixity of mind! He is seized with mortal fear and terror" to overcome which he would "go forth to the lonely tombs in the woods, out under the trees and abide the night through in those places of horror and affright.... And, as I tarried there, a deer came by, a bird caused a twig to fall, and the wind set all the leaves whispering; and I thought: 'Now it is coming—that fear and terror' ....but I neither stood still, nor sat, nor lay down until, pacing to and fro, I had mastered that fear and terror."

Paul Dahlke well remarks (*Buddhist Essays*, p. 15): "Never before did founder of religion speak like this. One

who thus speaks needs not allure with hopes of heavenly joy. One who speaks like this of himself attracts by that power with which the Truth attracts all who enter her domain."

Daily Routine: His life of ministry for nearly half a century was a life of strenuous work following a strict time-table of daily duties Rising early morning, washing and dressing himself, he meditated and then went out for alms, bowl in hand, alone or with his followers. Taking his meal with some hospitable host, he gave a discourse and returned to his retreat, waiting to hear if all his disciples had taken their meals Then he would suggest to them topics for meditation and retire for "Meditation during the noon-day head". The afternoon was given to public discourse followed by evening bath, meditation, discourse to his monks, and retirement for meditation and sleep. (From account of Buddhaghosha as given in Rhys Davids' American Lectures)

A Beggar before whom Kings bowed: He behaved like an ordinary monk all through his life "In the days when his reputation stood at its highest point, and his name was named throughout India among the foremost names, one might day by day see that man, before whom kings bowed themselves, walking about, alms-bowl in hand, through streets and alleys, from house to house, and without uttering any request, with downcast look, stand silently waiting until a morsel of food was thrown into his bowl" (Oldenberg). Once at Alavi, in the Simsapa forest, he was found resting on a cattle-path upon a couch of leaves in deep meditation, while it was bitterly cold winter and frosting: "rough is the ground trodden by the hoofs of the cattle; thin is the couch of leaves; light the monk's yellow robe; sharp the cutting winter wind," and

yet the Master said: "I live happily, with sublime uniformity." (From a Sutta of the *Anguttara.*)

Superhuman in Humility: His humility, utter and sincere, was itself superhuman. Once, "at the annual final Assembly of the monks, before the time of wandering began, the Exalted One looked round over the silent company and said to the monks: 'Well, ye disciples, I summon you to say whether you have any fault to find with me, whether in word or in deed'." Again, when a Brahmana asked him, "Does the honoured Gotama permit sleeping in the day-time?" the Buddha's frank answer was: "In the last month of summer, after the meal, when one has returned from the begging round, I confess to lying down upon the right side, upon the cloak, folded in four, and, with collected senses, falling asleep." He is always careful to disclaim any superhuman virtues: once he says to his disciples, "It is lack of understanding and insight into the Four Holy Truths that is to blame, O Brothers, that we—both you and I—so long have travelled the dreary road of *samsara*". We irresistibly feel: "This is the highest; farther can no man go!" (*Dahlke*).

Detesting Divination: Thus, as we have already seen, he did not permit exhibition of superhuman powers by his monks. "It is because", says he, "I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders that I loathe, and abhor, and am ashamed thereof" (*Kevaddha-Sutta*). All kinds of "divination, sooth-saying, foretelling, or forecasting", he condemns as "low arts" (*Brahmajala-Sutta*).

More anxious for Truth than Followers: Therefore he was anxious that the Truth should spread and not that his followers should increase. He was anxious that "the bad things should be put away, things that are corrupting, entailing birth renewal, bringing suffering, resulting in ill, making for birth, decay, and death in the future; that

the things that make for purity shall grow, so that full and abounding insight may be attained even here and now"—"and not because I wish to gain pupils." Thus he could say to an intending convert: "Let him who is your teacher be your teacher still." He asked Uruvela Kassapa, revered by "all the people of Anga and Magadha", and the leader of 500 Jatilas at Rajagriha, "to go first and inform them of his intentions" before changing to Buddhism (*Mahavagga*). Before permitting the Lichchhavi general, Siha, to be his disciple, he desired him not to withdraw his support from his quondam co-religionists, the Nataputtas or Nirgrantha Jains, lest they should be left helpless.

Impatient of Praise by Pupils: He could not stand his own praise by his disciples, however devoted and sincere. Once his favourite pupil, Sariputta, burst out: "Such faith have I, Lord, that methinks there never was nor will be nor is now any other greater or wiser than the Blessed One." The Buddha replied to this emotional outburst in his usual quiet and humorous manner: "Of course, Sariputta, you have known all the Buddhas of the past?" "No, Lord," said Sariputta "Well then, you know those of the future?" "No, Lord." "Then at least you know me and have penetrated my mind thoroughly." "Not even that, Lord." "Then why, Sariputta, are your words so grand and bold?"

Unmoved by Slander: He was equally unmoved by blame or slander. The Lichchhavi chief, Sunakkhatta, "unable to live the holy life under the Buddha," deserted the Order and went about Vaishali "proclaiming to all and sundry that the Blessed One has no knowledge of the things that lie beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, that his doctrine was a product of mere reasoning, a thing of his own wit's devising," and so forth (Majjhima).

Sariputta reported this to the Buddha who only said that Sunakkhatta "had said this thing only of his anger". His teaching was: "Who doth not, when reviled, revile again, a two-fold victory wins". "Abuse that is not answered is like the food rejected by the guest which reverts to the host." His one thought was how to make people realise the Truth that would end all suffering. He used to say: "Let a man of intelligence come to me, honest, candid, straightforward: I will instruct him .. and if he practise according as he is taught, then to know for himself and to realise that supreme religion and goal, for the sake of which clansmen go forth from the household life into the homeless state, will take him only seven days".

Control over Assemblies· The Buddha's greatness is also brought out in the debates and discourses marking every day of his ministry. There was perfect order in his Assemblies. King Ajatashatru, led by his physician, Jivaka, to one such Assembly prolonged into a full moon night, fearing its silence said: "You are playing me no tricks, Jivaka? You are not betraying me to my foes? How can it be that there should be no sound at all, not a sneeze, nor a cough, in so large an Assembly, among 1,250 of the brethren?" Looking on the Assembly seated in silence, calm as a clear lake, the King sighed: "Would that my son, Udayi Bhadda, might have such calm!"

Superiority in Debate: His controversial method was to put his opponent on the defensive. Nigrodha, the leader of 3,000 disciples, tried to outwit him, thinking that for his seclusion "his insight was ruined, he is not at home in conducting an Assembly, nor ready in conversation, but occupied only with the fringes of things", and asked him to expound his doctrine. The Buddha said it was difficult "for one of another view, without practice or teaching, to understand" it, but, "come now, Nigrodha, ask me a

question about your own doctrine." By this question, Nigrodha was dumbfounded. The Buddha himself said: "That in disputation with anyone whatsoever I could be thrown into confusion or embarrassment—there is no possibility of such a thing; and, because I know of no such possibility, on that account it is that I remain quiet and confident" And to Sariputta he further said: "And, when ye shall carry me hither upon a bed, the intellectual vigour of the Perfect One will remain unabated"

Greatness at Death: The truth of his remark is amply borne out by the scenes at his death-bed. To weeping Ananda he calmly said: "Be of good cheer, Ananda. Do not weep Have I not told you oftentimes that this is the regular course of things, that we must part from all that is precious and dear to us?"

Last Words: Great in life, the Buddha was greater in death. The founder of a System found no place in it for himself When questioned in his dying moments by Ananda for instructions for the Order, he answered: "The Tathagata thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood or that the Order is dependent upon him. Why then should he leave instructions in any matter concerning the Order?" And then came his classical declaration:

"Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be ye a refuge to yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth Look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves"

And then when the question of honouring his memory arose, he said in the same spirit: "The brother or sister who continually fulfils all the greater and lesser duties, who is correct in life, observing the precepts—it is he who rightly honours him with the worthiest homage." And

when Ananda asked the dying Buddha, "What are we to do, Lord, with the remains of the Tathagata?" he answered: "Hinder not yourselves, Ananda, by honouring the remains of the Tathagata. Be zealous, I beseech you, Ananda, in your behalf! Devote yourselves to your own good! Be earnest, be zealous, be intent on your own good! And after I am gone, let the Truths and Rules of the Order which I have set forth and laid down for you all be the Teacher to you!"

A Contemporary Opinion: The contemporary opinion about him is thus summed up by the Brahmana, Sonadanda, in a public speech.—

"Truly, sirs, the venerable Gotama is well-born on both sides, of pure descent, and with no reproach in respect of birth.

"He has gone forth into the religious life, giving up the great clan of his relations, much money and gold, and treasure .

"He is handsome, pleasant to look upon, inspiring trust, gifted with great beauty of complexion, fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold.

"He has a pleasant voice and a pleasing delivery, gifted with a polite address, distinct and not husky, suitable for making clear the matter in hand.

"He is the teacher of the teachers of many, one who puts righteousness in the forefront of his exhortations to the Brahmana race.

"To him people come right across the country from distant lands to ask questions, and he bids all men welcome, is congenial and conciliatory, not supercilious, accessible to all, not backward in conversation.

"Whereas some Samanas and Brahmanas have gained a reputation by all sorts of insignificant matters (such as

by wearing the clothes, etc.), his reputation comes from perfection in conduct and righteousness.

"And he is trusted, honoured, and venerated by the King of Magadha, Seniya Bimbisara, King Pasenadi of Kosala, and even by the leading Brahmana teacher Pokkara-sadi, with their children and wives, their people and courtiers or intimates" (*Sonadanda-Sutta*).

XIV

SHANKARACHARYA

TODAY those fundamentals of science and of life, space and time which were supposed to be the basic principles of the Universe -space. time, causality—all these have assumed new shapes. Space is supposed to be a function of time, space is supposed to be infinite, yet limited. The fourth dimension is mathematically proved to exist. All phenomena are relative and are functions of consciousness. Nothing is real, and it is not only the maxims of the Vedanta, but of Sir James Jeans which postulate that the teaching of modern science amounted to a realisation that all phenomena and events are a function of the mind. In other words, space does not exist by itself and time does not exist by itself. The doctrine of relativity which we owe to Einstein had been preached 2500 years ago, or even earlier, by the great Upanishad Karthas, and they affirmed that everything is imaginary but that there is one Immament Mind of Supreme Consciousness whose *maya* manifestations are the physical causations and appearances. So, as a result of laboratory experiments and mathematical calculations, the earlier materialistic theories and hypotheses have vanished and we have come back to the Vedanta, according to which the only thing that exists is the Supreme Mind of which all minds, all phenomena, are a part and which is the summation, embodiment and integration of the Universe and its evolution. That is the present state of

modern science. In other words, modern science—European and American science—the science that we owe to people like Einstein and Niels Bohr has led to this conclusion, that those firm foundations on which life and the problems and phenomena of life were accepted to be based and understood to rest are shifting, and that a new philosophy, a new conspectus, a new appraisal of those phenomena is essential and therefore we come back to these daring speculations which characterised the ancient sages of the world.

Let me take you through some of the great religions of the world. Amidst many differences, you see the assertion of the supremacy of mind over matter and the phenomena of matter. Take Christianity which is a simple faith in a certain sense, its creed resting upon belief in the help and succour of a particularly evolved soul, Jesus Christ. We know that on the basis of the direct, simple, faith of the Teacher the great Christian mystics and various thinkers who lived from the 3rd to the 11th century, built up a superstructure which, if carefully examined, is not very different from the Vedanta and is, to no small extent, derived from Plotinus and Plato who owed a great deal to Egypt and India. Take Islam. It again depends upon one or two hypotheses or doctrines of faith, namely, the universality and the oneness of God and the belief in an Apostle of God, but on the basis of that faith, simple, direct, democratic and absolutely close to the hearts and conscience of the people, there has been built up the elaborate edifice of Sufism which, if carefully examined in the works of Jalaluddin Rumi and Omar Khayyam, will be discovered to be not very different from the Vedanta. Our faith, if you read our Vedanta literally, is also a faith which recognises certain great powers, certain specific divinities, attributes or emanations of the Divine. *Bhakti*, worship, love, reverence—these things

lead to salvation. That is a simple faith, but as human problems became more and more complicated and people began to delve deeper and deeper below the surface they found that a more comprehensive synthesis was necessary.

Shankara presents to my mind a unique combination and the union, in the same person, of two qualities generally found separated. There are some who ascend to the heights of physical discipline and intellectual analysis: there are some who take difficult path and attain the high peaks where, in a rarefied air of abstract thought, they commune with the Infinite. Others ascend the summits by boundless love and compassion and faith. Tukaram, Kabir, Ramdas, were examples of persons whose affection, intense longing and personal devotion to some ideal of theirs (as in the case of St. Francis) led them to dedicate their lives and everything that they cherished to their particular ideal or Ishta Devata. That is the difference between what is called *jnana* and *bhakti*. It is not given to everybody to unite those qualities in the same existence or body. Shankara was able to do that. He was one of the rare examples of the union of the abstract and the concrete.

When we think of Shankara, with what do we mainly associate him? We associate him with the great *bhashyas* on the *Brahma-Sutras* and the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gita* and various other commentaries which contain the most abstract analysis, the most meticulous and microscopic examination of the phenomena of matter and spirit, evil and good, duality and oneness, with a power of analysis and introspection, utilising dry and passionless thought. And yet the same person was responsible for the *Dakshinamurti Stotra*, the *Soundarya Lahiri*, the *Ananda Lahiri* and the other clinging, fervid, passionate *stotras* and for

all those manifestations of the Divine in language as impassioned, as lyrical, as full of rapture and personal devotion as the outpourings of the mystics of the Christian and Mohammedan religions, and of our great men like Tukaram, Kabir and those wandering generations of singers who even today are one of the glories and accompaniments of Northern India life.

That by itself is a miracle, but there is another aspect which is not always realised and recognised even by people who know the life of Shankara. Shankara is reported to have passed away when he was about thirty-two years old. We in this scientific age with aeroplanes, motor-cars and all conveniences find it very difficult to undertake a journey from Madras to Kashmir, but several centuries ago, the great sage Shankara started on an expedition when he was sixteen to twenty years of age according to tradition, went to Badrinath and founded one of his monasteries there, to Shrinagar where he worshipped at the shrine and left his Chakra, to Dwaraka on the borders of Kathiawar where he founded another monastery, to Puri and to another place amongst those forest tracts in Mysore which then was the Rishyashringa Ashrama, the present Shringeri. He then came to Kanchi and various other places. Not only did he do all that, but throughout his journey he controverted, he disputed, he triumphed and he carried his particular gospel with him. Yet, with all this tireless work, he was able to find time to write some of the most exquisite poems in the Sanskrit language, exquisite alike in diction, in imagery and in outlook, was able to produce some of the most wonderful and subtle analyses of the manifestations of the human mind and mental processes. In addition, he was able to bring into actuality the *Advaita* doctrine which is one of the greatest solutions of the problems of human life. Whether that doc-

trine is held by others or not, there is no doubt that the intellectual and spiritual achievement of Shankara has made a deep impression on the history of world thought. It has made an impress on many religions and cults, which has not been openly acknowledged

Hinduism, as so many people have said in terms of criticism, and as I repeat in terms of justification and praise, is a great golden umbrella which shelters many forms of thought, many practices and many approaches to the Divine. Underneath that golden umbrella there is space for the doubter, the *Charvaka*, for the believer in the doctrine of stern predetermination of the Buddha. There is space for the pursuit of the personal God There is space for that renunciation of everything including personal Godhead and the identification of the Supreme Self with one's self which is synonymous with the Vedanta. That is a great and golden umbrella that has sheltered all forms of thought and speculation and it is an umbrella which is still standing, notwithstanding the fury of the elements and those batterings and shatterings which have affected other forms of thought Its stability is, in no small sense, due to the work of Shankara, because it was given to him to reconcile all the aspects, and, in his *bhashyas* and in his poems, what he has sought to do is to give explanations which comprehend the actualities of life, at the same time that they reach above and beyond them to a synthesis typified in the four *mahavakyas* of the Upanishads, identifying the Universe with the self that is both within and beyond it and explaining existence and death and action by the theory of Maya.

We know very little of the great personage, but one may try to collect, not from any biographical works, but from his minor poems and fragments, a kind of picture of the man as he was. It is very difficult in the case of Hindu

savants and philosophers to get the real picture because neither our great authors nor our great artists sought to obtain personal glory or immortality of fame In a certain poem he prays to be released from four kinds of Fate The things that he expostulated against, the things he wanted to be guarded against and which he regarded as dangers to healthy spiritual life were (1) the act of being a Purohita – the act of being the outer intermediary between the Divine and man, a position that too often leads to arrogance and obscurantism and exploitation, (2) carnal lust as a darkener of the mind (3) political leadership as the headman of the community a status that is too often accompanied by self seeking and corruption and the process of cheapening oneself by doing everything that is necessary to make oneself a leader (4) election as Pontiff

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Speaking of the principles of *Advaita*, Shankara has stated in the *Manisha Panchaka* that one was secure so long as one realised that one was Brahman and that the world was *maya kalpita* the creation of the mind and had no separate existence Eddington, the modern scientist, says the same thing in a different language and with a different emphasis Shankara was, however, infinitely tolerant. To those whose temperament leads them to devotion to particular divinities or manifestations, let there be no hindrance or obstruction because, out of the very boundless nature of love, will come the realisation of something beyond that love This was his message and that is how I reconcile these abstract theories with his hymns He regards Love and *bhakti* as a milestone in the path, as steps leading to the citadel on high, wherein sits enthroned the ultimate truth of Vedanta that nothing exists apart from the great entity, call it Brahman or Over-Soul, that

that Over-Soul is yourself and myself and that all our conflicts and difficulties are due to an illusion which makes for separateness where no separateness exists. The vision that comes both to the *bhakta* and the *jnani* is the vision, not of anything outside one's self, but something within one's self—that vision may be obtained partly by physical means, because the conquest of the body is necessary for the conquest of the mind, but, after the body has been conquered, the mind has to be canalised and then the spirit is merged in the Supreme. Shankara attempted in many ways to tread the path which has been trodden by several philosophers and prophets, but his glory is characteristic in that he effected a synthesis, a harmonious adaptation of these various ideals and made it possible for people with different equipments, with different heredities and different life-histories to follow their own bent of mind, their own philosophy but, at the same time, to aspire beyond that individual philosophy to that supreme revelation in which the individual soul merges into the Infinite and is not differentiated from that by interposed obstructions and which, however it may be termed, is the one thing which exists and which has created everything, is immanent in everything and is yet transcendental.

ried out wholesale massacres and destroyed Hindu shrines, while even milder rulers often used force to bring about their people's conversion. The *Jiziya*, a tax on non-Mohammedans, was generally enforced . Yet in spite of persecution, Hinduism flourished "

The destruction of their temples and the outrages on their sacred traditions by the north-western invaders did not shake the faith of the Hindus in their religion. In many instances, it was a period of great religious upheavals. The *bhakti* or devotional school of thought acquired strength and a great wave of devotion of the heart to Vishnu or Hari swept through the land

Shankaracharya, the supreme exponent of Hinduism, had stressed the importance of *bhakti* as a means to purify the heart; but his main theme was knowledge or gnosis which alone, according to the Vedic doctrines, leads to the inner enlightenment and ultimate deliverance of the soul from the bonds of nescience

Ramanuja (A D. 1100), a southern teacher of great erudition and a monk of pious character, developed the school of Devotion in his commentary on the Upanishads, the *Gita* and the Vyasa Sutras His doctrine is called Vishishtadvaita, or qualified monism, according to which the Universe is the body of God, and His spirit animating the Universe is the Essence of man Even in the final re-union with Hari, the spirit retains its individuality. Sri Krishna, the teacher of that most wonderful scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the cowherd of Vrindavan, is regarded as the supreme incarnation of Vishnu. Rama, the ideal man and king, is also regarded as an incarnation. Man loves his personality and clings to it with tenacity. In Krishna and Rama the Hindu mind found the very ideals of perfection and wisdom that it loved

Northern India adopted the *bhakti* school of thought,

and the bleeding soul of the Hindus of that time found consolation in the wisdom of compassion, benevolence and self-surrender to Krishna or Rama. Men, women and children found aesthetic, moral and spiritual food in the personality of Krishna and received the spiritual upliftment and ecstasy which made them forget the horrors of their environment and in some cases brought real and abiding peace to their hearts. What more does the spirit of man need?

Poets of outstanding ability and of a cosmopolitan outlook on life sang of Krishna and Rama in their sweet and immortal songs in the Hindi language, the language of the masses.

Many of these spiritual singers were contemporary with Kabir, and it is certain that the child Kabir, born in 1398, heard these sweet devotional lyrics when he was rocked in the cradle by his mother

Vidyapati, Umapati, Mirabai and others poured forth their burning love, pure as the waters of the Ganges and the Jumna, and men of every walk of life took up these songs and sang of Radha-Krishna and Sita-Ram.

The school of *bhakti* abolished the rigid caste rules, and it was commonly held that anybody who worshipped God belonged to God irrespective of his caste and birth.

"Jat pant puchhe na koi
Har Ko bhaje so karka hoi"

A shoe-maker, Rai Das, was hailed as a saint and worshipped by all on account of his self-transcending love of God.

The Hindu saint whose influence moulded the life of Kabir was Ramananda (1400-1417) A great teacher was Swami Ramananda. His holy life was a source of inspiration to many. Among his disciples were numbered Sena,

a barber, Dhanna, a peasant, and Rai Das, a leather worker.

Having travelled through Northern India teaching the doctrine of devotion, karma, reincarnation and personal piety, Ramananda lived in the holy city of Kashi (Benares) when Kabir was a child. Hundreds flocked to him every morning to join him in his devotion.

One of the results of the contact of Hinduism and Islam was the development of the Sufi school in Islam, which was free from fanaticism and had a close resemblance to the system of Ramanuja. The Sufi singers mixed freely with the Hindu *bhaktas* and fraternised with men of other cults.

Though the India of the time of Kabir was characterised by misrule and chaos, yet there was great religious activity and literary upheaval in the varnacular.

Benares has ever been the seat of learning and religious fervour in India. Its gorgeous temples, the slow current of the Ganges, the processions of monks, the debates of scholars and the stately flights of steps cannot but impress the mind of one who lives there as well as even the casual visitor. Kabir is said to have passed his boyhood in this city of Shiva, in which Shakya Muni Buddha "turned the wheel of Law" some 1,500 years before Kabir.

Like the lives of other great religious teachers of the past--excepting Mohammed—the life of Kabir is full of legends. The following account may be taken as reasonably correct.

A.D. 1398 is the traditional date of the birth of the Saint Kabir. According to tradition, Kabir was born in Benares itself, though the *Benares Gazetteer* gives Belhara, a village in the district of Azamgarh, as the place of his birth.

A Brahmana virgin widow is said to have given birth

to the child who was subsequently called Kabir. The birth is said to have been miraculous. All followers of Kabir admit that Kabir was brought up in the house of a Moslem named Nur Ali or Nura, a weaver, whose wife was named Nima. It is said that a Hindu monk named Ashtananda, who had a knowledge of the real parentage of Kabir, took care to teach him Hindu ideas and ideals when he was a child.

Kabir was a precocious child. He was sent to a Moslem teacher. But he was not satisfied with the teachings given and left him.

From his childhood the religious quest seems to have been his favourite pursuit. The traditional accounts of the birth of Creation and other such matters did not satisfy him.

Kabir Kasauti, an old work taken as authentic by the followers of Kabir, says that in his childhood he did not identify himself definitely with either Hinduism or Islam, and gave offence to many. While playing, he often cried: "Ram, Ram" or "Hari, Hari". The Moslems warned him and said that he was a kafir, an unbeliever Kabir replied saying: "He who uses violence or rules others, who drinks intoxicants, or seizes the goods of others is a kafir."

He put the *tilak* (the sacred mark) on his forehead; and used the *janeu* (sacred thread). The Brahmanas expostulated: "This is not thy religion. Thou hast made thyself a Vaishnavite and callest on Vishnu, Narayana, Hari, Govinda; this is our religion." He answered one of their leaders: "On my tongue Vishnu, in my eyes Narayana, and in my heart Govinda dwells....My meditation is with Hari."

When Kabir was hardly a youth, Ramananda was preaching his doctrine of absorption in God through pure devotion and benevolence. Evidently Ramananda Swami

was a magnetic personality. He had thousands of selfless disciples and was held in great esteem by those who knew him. Ramananda was in love with rituals and preached *bhakti* as the means to God-realisation.

Kabir heard him in the streets of Benares and was profoundly impressed with his teachings and personality. Knowing well that a teacherless mystic is not fitted for a life of higher devotion and contemplation, Kabir applied to Ramananda for initiation. It was after hesitation and trial that Kabir was accepted as a disciple by Ramananda.

It is stated by some writers that Kabir was a Sufi and a disciple of some Moslem teacher Professor Wilson, a great authority on the subject, does not hold this view.

Kabir served his teacher personally with devotion, and learned from him not only the theoretical side of the Hindu doctrine, but also the mystic Yoga which he seems to have practised with great patience. Kabir was not a pundit; probably he did not know Sanskrit at all. Having listened to the philosophical controversies that were held between the Benares pundits and his guru, Kabir acquired a thorough knowledge of Vedanta and Sankhya.

In his private life Kabir continued to work as a weaver, spending a part of his earnings on charity and hospitality to the sadhus and part on Nura.

Once he mysteriously disappeared for a while, then suddenly reappeared, full of light, peace and joy.

Kabir married a woman named Loi. Her name figures in many of his songs. We see a reference to Kabir's marriage in the *Adi Grantha*, the Sikh holy book:

"His first wife was ugly, of low caste,
of ill-boding feature . . .
The present wife is beautiful, intelligent,
of auspicious features, easily child-bearing."

(Quoted by G. H. Westcott).

There are several references by Kabir in his songs to his son Kamal, some traditions credit him with two sons

During the early days of his devotion, Kabir encountered much opposition from his family His mother often reproached him with neglecting his work and insisted on his giving up his religious devotions and study His outspoken criticism of the rituals of both Hinduism and Islam, brought on him the wrath of his fellow citizens and caused annoyance to his family After his father's death the burden of supporting the family fell on Kabir His mother protested and wanted him to mind his family affairs only

Kabir's household affairs undoubtedly suffered on account of his devotion to religious contemplation and service of his teacher In a verse he refers to this and says

> O thou art ever compassionate to the poor
> I have put all my family into the boat which is
> under thy care

In another verse Kabir makes the following reference to his mother

> Kabir's mother is distressed and
> weepeth saying O God how
> shall I support my children?
> Kabir hath relinquished weaving and
> has made God's house his only support

We find Kabir in the company of a Moslem teacher, Taqi of Jhusi near Allahabad participating in his devotion Taqi gave his full spiritual blessings to Kabir and kept a friendly eye on him throughout his life they say

Kabir's wife Loi suffered for want of rice and vegetables in the household her husband having neglected them In fact, Kabir was passing through those mystic experiences in which the worldly objects seem to receive

no attention from a mystic. She complained of the monks in whose company he passed his time. To this complaint, Kabir replied:

> "These devotees are the support of the drowning,
> hear, O mis-guided Loi!
> Kabir is under the protection of these devotees"

Kabir obtained the full inner illumination "by the grace of Guru Ramananda." Now all doubts were gone and he saw one Infinite Reality within and without. He became a saint, a liberated being. He had seen God as his own spiritual Self.

Kabir lived a life of voluntary poverty and simplicity. Having seen the eternal beauties of the inner world, the spiritual life, he was in perfect peace and joy. Nothing could add to or subtract from the spiritual joy of his God-vision. He found in the life of contemplation, as Aristotle says, all he needed. The following song is noteworthy:

> "Kabir says, I have neither a thatched roof, nor hut,
> Neither have I a house nor a village.
> I think Hari will ask "Who art thou?"
> I have neither caste nor name . . .
>
> I have never been acqisitive; Thy name
> alone
> O Hari, is enough for me."

Kabir says: "My heart is full of happiness. ." Though Kabir lived in poverty he treated his uninvited guests with hospitality. Sometimes Loi borrowed salt and rice to feed a guest. Anybody who knocked at his door was received with joy and given hospitality.

To a certain section of the people Kabir was an impostor and they treated him with contumely.

Sometimes Kabir was called a thief, pander and dancer. He says:

"O Ram, thou art my only refuge!
I have no need to bow to any man!

I am free from fellowship or partnership
with any one.
Honour or dishonour are just the same to me.

Kabir says, the honour of Hari is
real.
O give up all, and praise only Ram."

Among the disciples of Kabir, his wife Loi, his son Kamal, and one Dharam Das are prominently mentioned. One Surat Gopal Sahib is also mentioned as one of his chief disciples

Kabir was summoned by Sikandar Lodi, the reigning sovereign of Delhi, to answer to the charges of infidelity preferred against him both by Hindus and Moslems The Moslems complained that the weaver outraged the ears of the faithful Moslems with his cries of "Ram, Ram," in the streets. The Hindus complained that he unlawfully used the *tilak* and *janeu* (sacred thread).

When brought before the king, Kabir refused to make obeisance.

After a short conversation the king was convinced of the innocence of Kabir and let him go. But his enemies remained unsatisfied. They approached Taqi, who had influence over the court, and Taqi pronounced Kabir a political danger, hated both by Hindus and Moslems. Charges of moral turpitude were also made against the saint. It was said that he associated daily with low caste reprobates and women of bad character.

Kabir was again brought before the king and it is said that a few of his close associates were among his accusers. Kabir was fearless and without any bitterness towards them. Death or life is the same to one who has

known God. Kabir's answer to the charge of immorality is as follows in his own words:

> "That I know all to be one, what cause
> of grief is that to others?
> If I am dishonoured, I have lost my
> own honour: others need pay no heed
> Mean I am, with the mean I would
> be numbered . . .
> For honour and dishonour I care
> not; he whose eyes are opened,
> he will understand
> Kabir says, honour is based on this:
> renounce all else sing only Ram
>
> (Quoted by Admad Shah)

The doctors of Moslem law (Qazi) demanded that Kabir should live as a true Moslem and threatened death if he did otherwise. Kabir was not to be daunted. He had overcome all fear of death. He answered: "Know only One Lord animating the hearts of both Hindus and Moslems. He is not the monopoly of either of them. I worship Him in any form I see Him."

They asked him why he called himself Kabir which, in Islam, is one of the names of God. Kabir answered:

> "My name is Kabir; all the world knows this.
> In the three worlds is my name and happiness is my
> abode.
> Water, air, the seasons, thus I created the world.
> The unstruck wave thunders in
> Heaven, and Soham keeps time
> I made manifest the seed of Brahma
> . . . God, men and rishis (sages)
> do not find my end. Kabir's
> saints alone can find it . . .
> Hear, O Sikandar, I am a Pir of
> both religions."

Kabir was condemned as a heretic, and having been bound with chains was thrown into the river. The tradition says that "the bonds could not hold him nor the water drown." He was thrown, bound in chains, before infuriated elephants. But the elephants did not hurt him as Kabir "was protected by the power of the name of Hari."

Kabir lived to the age of 120, and voluntarily gave up his body in a town near the holy city of Benares. "Ram is in Benares and also in every other place," said Kabir when his disciples asked him to go to Benares to die.

Tradition says that a dispute arose as to the disposal of Kabir's body, between the two rivals—Hindus and Mohammedans. An appeal to arms seemed imminent. A passing holy man appeared and bade the rivals to raise the sheet that covered the saint Kabir's body. They did so, and to their great surprise, found beneath a heap of fresh and fragrant flowers

Kabir wrote in Hindi, an off shoot of Sanskrit. Evidently he was not versed in Sanskrit which was long, long before Kabir, a highly-developed language. Kabir's Hindi is simple and his style is attractive. He invented many new metres and wrote verse in so graceful and flowing a language that we can call him one of the fathers of Hindi poetry The great Hindi poets, Keshav Das, Sur Das, Tulsi Das and Behari Das, who compare favourably with Dante and Shakespeare, were indebted to Kabir.

Most of the verses of Kabir are hymns of devotion, mysticism and discipline. He seldom uses flowery language. Like the great Chinese poets of the Tang and Sung periods Kabir is a poet without making efforts to be one. In his simple, natural way poetry flows from him like water from a fountain.

Kabir was a great singer. Dressed as a poor wander-

ing devotee, drunk with the love of God, he used to go about with a hand-drum, pouring forth his heart in his songs. He composed thousands of songs, many of which are orally known, but not yet included in any anthology.

Kabir had four chief disciples and eight more to whom he imparted his inner teachings. Each of them has composed songs, attributing them to Kabir. It is, therefore, not easy to say which of the songs credited to Kabir are by him. *Sukh Ni Dhan* (Treasure of Happiness), *Guru Mahatmya* (Greatness of the Guru), and *Amarmul* (Root of Immortality) contain the spiritual teachings of Kabir, but they are not his compositions. Dharam Das, a disciple of Kabir, is perhaps the author of one of them. The dialogue between Kabir and the great Hatha Yogi teacher, Gorakhnath, containing many deep spiritual truths, is not Kabir's composition as the language is more modern and the style not so simple as that of Kabir.

The basis of Kabir's teachings is the strict monotheism of the Upanishads. He places the Lord of the Universe in the heart of man as his higher Self, where alone the soul can discover Him.

Kabir is a follower of the pure Advaita school of Vedic thought as interpreted by the greatest of the Indian philosophers, Shankaracharya. Kabir worshipped the self-conditioned aspect of the attributeless God, through His own power called Maya. He held that the worship of the self-conditioned leads to the contemplation and realisation of the Absolute. Kabir describes Him as compassionate, most lovable, omniscient and the saviour, with whom man can hold intercourse in his being.

Kabir says:

> "He himself is the tree, the seed, and the form.
> He himself is the flower, the fruit and the shade . . .
> He is the breath, the word, and the meaning."

Kabir admits Maya, the principle of limitation which, though unreal, yet is the root cause of the false knowledge of duality.

Kabir finds Love or *bhakti* the easiest way to realise the Infinite within one's own Self. He is positive that God can be seen only in the being of man and that then the whole Universe becomes a mirror reflecting the bliss and beauty of God.

Many of the most beautiful hymns of Kabir are the expressions of his heart's devotion to the Lord immanent and yet transcendent The name of God dearest to Kabir is Ram. He sometimes calls Him Hari and when he speaks of His mystic names uses the sacred word *Om* The repetition of the name of Ram, according to the saint, removes all the sins of man and makes him fit to see God in his heart. Kabir says in his *Bijak* :

"Hardly a friend have I at all:
What more shall I say, O brother .
Sitting in the air, studying Yoga,
  Vedas, rites and astrology, they
  are demented.
. . . Kabir says the hope of the Yogi
  and the Jangam is withered
If they repeat, like the bird Chatrik,
  the name of Ram, their abode in
  bhakti is sure."

Kabir called compassion the greatest virtue, and non-attachment to sense-objects the key to inner tranquillity in which Ram is mirrored as our soul. Mind, free of all earthly desires, devoted to the service of the guru rises to the divine state, through love of Ram.

"Without the guru there is no release."

Kabir loved his guru Ramananda as God and he recommends this practice to his disciples.

"Where Spring holds sway the twelve
months through, few have conceived
the perfection there.
Where light as rain pours down in
ceaseless streams, where the forest grows
green in all its eighteen
regions —
Where unrestrained the waters well up
within, and the cleansing air bears
away all foulness —
No trees are there, yet heaven is
bright with blossoms
Shiv and Brahma desire to drink its
perfume"

Unlike other Hindu saints, Kabir condemns idol-worship and sees no meaning in rituals and pilgrimages. He has little patience with asceticism either No wonder he incurred the hostility of the orthodox by his sharp condemnation of the outer practices of Hinduism

Kabir condemns the caste system of the Hindus. To him a Brahmana who reads the Vedas and a cultivator who tills the ground are equal. All mankind is one family and God is the supreme head of it.

The doctrines of Karma and transmigration, the basic Hindu teachings, are upheld by Kabir:

"The soul assumes many forms, according to its merits.
After birth and death it again comes to a body."

Kabir believes in man's ability to see God, in this very life. We can see from his words that he claims to have seen God, the fountain-head of all Joy, Truth and Beauty. Here is the personal testimony of Kabir as translated by Tagore:

"I have known in my body the Sport of the Universe:

I have escaped from the error of this world.
The inward and the outward are become as one sky;
the Infinite and the finite are united; I am drunk with the sight of All!". . ...

In another song quoted in the *Adi Grantha* of Nanak, Kabir says:

"I have met God who dwelleth in the heart.
When a stream is lost in the Ganges
It becometh the Ganges itself.

Kabir is one of the rare Hindu saints who speak the language of the Quran and he quotes, approvingly, many of its teachings. His acquaintance with Islam is not superficial. He often mentions Adam and Eve and his references to the Moslem customs are significant. He disapproves of the rite of circumcision and discourages pilgrimage to Mecca.

"They fast all day, at night they slaughter the cow.
Here murder their devotion; how can this please God?
O Qazi, thy One God is in thee thou beholdest Him not by thought and reflection
Thou gainest nothing by reading and study, O madman, since thou regard'st Him not in thy heart . . .
What availeth thee thy pilgrimage to Mecca?"

Whether Kabir founded the order called Kabir Panth is open to doubt. He was most anxious to see the unrighteous and the ignorant restored to the path of devotion and compassion, and he often said that the chief duty of a holy man is to help others to the path of virtue and unity with God. Kabir was indifferent to wealth and loved simplicity. The order called Kabir Panth is rich and the life of its chief is far from being simple.

There are two main sections of the order: one has its headquarters at Kabir Chaura at Benares, and the

other at Chattisgarh, in the Central Provinces of India.

There are two shrines to Kabir in the Benares headquarters; one is in the custody of the Hindus and the other is in the hands of Moslems. There is a shrine dedicated to Kamal also.

The order of Kabir is above the caste system of the Hindus and he who joins the fraternity gives up all caste prejudices. The Shudras, or the untouchables of India, are welcome to the order and the order has done much to elevate the lot of these unfortunate followers of the Hindu Dharma.

The followers of Kabir are strict vegetarians and abstain from the use of alcohol.

The influence of Kabir is noticeable in many sects of India. The Sikhs of the Punjab, the noble followers of Guru Nanak, perhaps one of the disciples of Kabir himself, acknowledge Kabir as one of the great Mahatmas and sing his hymns daily. The Vairagis, the Udasees and others are all lovers of Kabir and read his literature. Kabir is quoted by the Moslem Sufis freely. In the mystic circles of the Yogis he is regarded with reverence and his exposition of the Chakras is used by them.

Kabir was an *avadhut*. Having realised God as his Self he lived in ecstasy and like Sur Das his songs welled forth from his being, without any conscious effort on his part. Men like Kabir are not in favour of orders and are alive to the future contradictions and inconstancies that such orders are likely to create.

There are fifty articles of the Kabir Panthi doctrine, a few of which are quoted below:

1. One must devote oneself to the contemplation of the One all-pervading, attributeless Brahman, called Sat Purush. Brahman is known only by means of the Sat Guru.

2. Brahman and Kabir are one. If anyone thinks that Kabir and Brahman — Guru and God — are not one, he will not find God.

3. One ought to serve one's Guru with body, mind and wealth. place reliance on his word and obey him. He who thinks there is any difference between Guru and God will find that all his devotion and meditation will be in vain.

4. One ought to love and serve one's fellow Satsangees All devotees of God are worthy of great respect.

5. One ought to count all living creatures as one's own body and treat them with kindness One ought to refrain from giving any pain, at any place or any time, to any living creature.

6 All intoxicating drinks are forbidden.

7. The only way to salvation is the Essence of the Word (Sar Sabda).

8. Without true love, devotion is fruitless.

9. Without liberality, no one can attain salvation.

10. Do not curse any one, nor speak evil, nor think unkindly of any one

11. So long as one thinks much of one's body, and nourishes it, as if it were real, one cannot give full obedience to one's Guru.

Let me conclude this short article on Kabir with the following Sakhis:

> "My song is new: none understands the strain.
> Whoever has perceived this word; he is a King of Kings."
> "O Kabir, deck Thyself in the garments of love, and dance,
> To him is given honour, whose body and soul live Truth."

XVI

CHAITANYA AND MIRABAI

In the fourteenth century, the classics and the philosophies receded into the background. Even the Puranas by themselves did not meet the requirements of the people. And the cult of *bhakti* became the most potent factor in the Puranic movement, stimulating an intensely devotional attitude towards the gods and particularly Sri Krishna.

I

Sri Krishna was the first to become the centre of a great devotional impulse. He occupies the highest place in the Indian pantheon; in poetry, the supreme love; in religion, he is God himself, and in philosophy, the all-pervading Over-soul, Parabrahman He is the One who delivered the message of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the most popular and profound scripture in a land of conflicting scriptures, which has inspired the life and thought of great Indians from Shankara to Tilak, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi, among the moderns He has fired the imagination of almost every Indian poet since the *Bhagavata* was composed (c. 8th century). And as the very embodiment of triumphant manhood, he has brought inspiration and solace to millions for centuries

In the *Rig-Veda*, Vishnu, the Sun-god was the omniscient, *trivikramo visvasya*, and Varuna, the Sky-god, was the king of heavens, *bhuvanasya raja*. Later *Ailarcya*

Brahmana elevated Vishnu to the position of the greatest of gods, and the Vedic myths connected with other gods were transferred to him. *Taittiriya Aranyaka* identified him with Narayana, an ancient Rishi, who, as an incarnation of Vishnu, was worshipped by a sect known as Pancharatra. When the original *Bhagavad-Gita* was composed, Sri Krishna, the Yadava hero, had already been accepted as the avatar of Vishnu who had revealed his macrocosmic form (*virat-svarupa*) to Arjuna. All these different attributes came to be transferred to one deity, the god Vasudeva, whose worship was common even in the days of the grammarian Panini (c. B.C. 500). Bhagavan Vasudeva's devotees came to be known as Bhagavatas; such a one was Heliodoros, the ambassador of a Greek king, who came to India (c. B.C. 200). The Gupta emperors were styled *Paramabhagavatas*, the great devotees of Bhagavan, and the worship of Vishnu and his spouse Lakshmi was popular in the Gupta period.

The Vaishnava mystics and saints known as Alvars were apostles of *bhakti* before the rise of Shankara (c. 800), who refers to the worship of Parabrahman in the form of Bhagavan Vasudeva. The *Vishnu Purana* had for its object the glorification of Vishnu as Vasudeva. The God was great; the devotee, weak and helpless and prayed to his Master with humility.

This *bhakti* was invested with all the attributes of earthly love. Narada, in his *Bhaktisutra*, defines it as of the nature of intense love. Sandilya, in his *Bhaktisutra*, explains it to be attachment towards God, which as amplified by the commentator, means love "characterized by horripilation and other signs of worldly love, like the love felt by Shakuntala for Dushyanta." The new *bhakti* was an emotion which impelled the *bhakta*, the devotee, to worship the Lord, to seek him everywhere, to yearn for him,

to quarrel with him, to remove the distance which reverence implies, in short, to love him passionately as one would a human lover. This new emotion led the national imagination, before c. 800, to create Radha, the eternal bride of Sri Krishna, more human and lovable than the majestic Lakshmi or Rukmini of the Puranas. In *Dhvanyaloka* (c. 850) she shares the incense with Krishna; about 980 she is mentioned as his spouse in an inscription of king Amoghavarsha of Dhara.

In the *Bhagavata Purana*, composed sometime between c. 600 and c. 800, prominence is given to the intense lovability of Krishna as a superb child, youth, lover, stateman and seer, being God Himself. This was an epoch-making work; it soon acquired predominant influence in the country, as much through its being the gospel of the new emotion as by its rare literary charm. Its sentiments and turns of expression were soon carried to the doors of every villager by the *pauranikas* in all provinces. Pure *bhakti* is beautifully expressed in the *Bhagavata*:

"As the wingless nestlings wait for the mother, as the hungry calves long to be suckled, as the love-lorn damsel waits for her lover, so, lotus-eyed, does my mind yearn for thee. . . . To hear about Vishnu, to sing of Him, to remember Him, to fall at His feet, to worship Him, to bow to Him, to serve Him, to be His friend, to dedicate oneself to Him, is the nine-fold *bhakti*."

To the *gopis*, (says Krishna): "The nights when I, their lover, went about with them in Vrindavan, were like flitting moments, but when I left them, their nights were endless as cycles. . . . In this way, hundreds who knew not My real Self loved Me only as their Lover, and attained to Me, the Parabrahman."

The literary range and richness of the *Bhagavata Purana* at places reaches the inspired directness of the

Bhagavad-Gita. Its powerful influence can be traced over the religious and secular art and literature of the whole country. The *Panchadhyaya,* the five chapters of the *Dashama Skandha* describing the sports of Krishna with the milk-maids, is a song of everlasting joy and found expression not only in literature, but in every form of art.

The great revolution which the *Bhagavata Purana* made in the cardinal doctrine of Vedanta was to transfer the emphasis from knowledge, yoga and surrender to God to the passionate and intense love for Sri Krishna who, in human form, was not an incarnation but God Himself". It is one of the greatest devotional scriptures of the world.

Thus the Puranic movement, leavened by *bhakti,* captured the religious thought and sentiment of the age.

II

Long before the tenth century *bhakti* had taken hold of the South Temples had been raised to Vishnu and Sankarshana. The twelve Vaishnava mystics and saints, known as Alvars, were wandering singers "mad after God;" one of them was a prince, another a beggar, a third a woman, a fourth an untouchable According to the *bhakti* of Narayana which they followed and taught, God was accessible by intense love and complete self-surrender to all irrespective of rank or caste or even culture. Their devotional songs became popular under the name of the *Vaishnava Veda,* the scriptures of the Vishnu cult.

After the Alvars came the Acharyas, who gave it a philosophic basis In c 1000, Yamunacharya propounded the doctrine of *prapatti,* surrender to God, his great-grandson Ramanuja, who succeeded him, gave a complete philosophic background to the movement, and elevated it to the level of a monotheistic religion. The influence of the *Bhagavata,* after the *Ramayana* and the *Maha-*

bharata the most potent source of inspiration in India, led to the foundations of different schools of *bhakti* under five great saints. These great philosopher-saints, by their learning, devotion and dialectic skill, founded new schools of thought: and the linguistic and intellectual unity which Sanskrit imparted made it easy for them to introduce a new outlook in the religious and moral life of India. To them we owe the ubiquity of Krishna-consciousness in the country. About 1150, Nimbarka founded a new school in Telangana stressing the pure *bhakti* of Sri Krishna and Radha. "We worship", says he, "Radha, the daughter of Vrishabha, the goddess who joyfully adorns the left lap of the great deity Sri Krishna, as beautiful as Sri Krishna himself, surrounded by thousands of damsels. She it is who fulfils all desires" Madhva (c 1199-1278) laid the foundation of a yet more vigorous Vaishnava cult.

Vishnusvami, said to be a teacher of Jnaneshvara and accepted by Vallabha as his guru, appears to be a powerful teacher-saint of the Radha Krishna cult though little is known about him. The Maharashtra school of *bhakti*, however, headed by Jnaneshvara, Namdev, Eknath and later Tukaram worship Krishna and his spouse Rukmini. Their *bhakti* has for its symbol the pure and serene love of the husband and wife (*kanta bhava*), not the temptations of love of Krishna and Radha (*madhura bhava*). Chaitanya was as much the producer of *bhakti* as of the latest Buddhistic influences in Bengal.

In the tenth century, decadent Buddhism under the influence of Kahna Bhatta, a great scholar and poet of Bengal, preached illicit love and complete bodily and mental surrender to the teacher as the only way to emancipation. The Radha-Krishna romance had already obtained a hold over the popular mind through folk-songs and festivals. Both these currents combined to strengthen the

bhakti of Sri Krishna. Umapati, in the eleventh century, and Jayadeva, the author of the *Gita-Govinda,* in the twelfth, wrote highly artistic and sensuous poems of Sri Krishna. The linguistic, rhythmic and sentimental graces of *Gita-Govinda* caught the imagination of all *bhaktas* in the country, and within a century of its composition, it was recognised as a classic.

III

In the 15th century, the Sultanate of Delhi was spreading destruction in the holy places in the North. Still, in Vrindavan, where Sri Krishna spent His childhood with the *gopis*, the heart of India was throbbing. Wherever the songs of Radha-Krishna were sung — and they were sung in all parts of India – or, wherever Vishnu was worshipped and the *Bhagavad-Gita* or the *Bhagavata* recited, Vrindavan was the living symbol of joy in this life and of salvation in the next.

Pilgrims were drawn to it from all parts of the country from generation to generation, particularly in the holy month of *Bhadrapada,* — in north India (Shravan in western India) – in which Sri Krishna was born.

In the fourteenth century at Navadvipa (Nadia) an ancient centre of learning in Bengal, some schools of the later Buddhism preached love as the one avenue leading to Final Emancipation. That part of the country also rang with the passionate love-songs of one of the greatest of Indian poets, Chandidasa.

During the reign of Sikandar Lodi, Madhavendrapuri, a *dashnami sannyasi*, and a disciple of Madhva, came with the lyrics of Chandidasa ringing in his ears to Vrindavan. On the banks of the Yamuna, in the sacred groves, hallowed by the divine romance of Radha and Sri Krishna,

the learned sadhu wandered like a maiden in love, singing songs and seeking His love.

Madhavendra's ardent love fused his learning and devotion into a flame and gave new vitality to the devotional schools of Bengal. He built a temple in Vrindavan which attracted *bhaktas* from Bengal.

IV

Vishvambhara or Nimai, as he was affectionately called, was born in February 1486 to a pious and learned brahmana of Nadia. As he grew up into a handsome, impetuous and brilliant youth, he evoked universal admiration. He married and settled down, running a *tol.*

A few years later, when Nimai went to Gaya to perform his father's obsequial ceremonies, Ishvara Puri, a disciple of Madhavendra, initiated him into the mysteries of *bhakti.* Nimai was stirred to his depths; mystic visions awoke in him the love of Sri Krishna. Pride fell from him and so did the lure of the world. "Leave me", he said, "I am not of the world. I will go to Vrindavan and meet my Lord."

Like a love-lorn, heart-broken maid, pining for Sri Krishna, he sang of the Lord, danced for Him, fainted, over-borne by the pangs of separation, often went into an ecstatic trance. His mother thought he was mad. But the devotees knew better. "He was a God", they said.

A band of devotees soon gathered round this young, godlike saint and went with him from place to place. He led the devotional *kirtans* in the course of which he and his followers sang and danced ceaselessly to the accompaniment of music. Nimai became intoxicated with God and his followers saw in him Sri Krishna Himself.

Nimai took *sannyasa* in 1510 under the name of Krishna Chaitanya and sent his follower, Loknatha, to make

Vrindavan the centre of *bhakti*. After a short stay at Puri, he went on an all-India tour, visiting the shrines and holy places dedicated to Sri Krishna. Wherever he went, his inspiring presence and flaming love for Sri Krisnna set fire to the hearts of those who came to him.

Wherever he went men followed him Scholars wedded to Vedanta became his devotees; rich men provided him and his party with every facility and kings built temples wherever he halted.

Ultimately, in obedience to the wishes of his mother he went to live at Puri. From time to time congregations of his followers gathered there from all parts of India. Chaitanya's *kirtan* parties led through the streets of the town became the great attraction.

V

Two eminent officers of the Nawab of Gaud — Sakar Malik and Dabir Khan -- met Chaitanya on one of his tours and were so much impressed by the saint that they left their positions, their wealth and their faith, and, by the orders of the Master came to live in Vrindavan under the names of Sanatana and Rupa.

In about 1506 Vallabhacharya Goswami, who was more of a scholar than a *bhakta* founded a shrine of Shrinathji in Vrindavan. He established the cult of *Pushtimarga* which was later to inspire the poetry of the eight poets, headed by the immortal Surdas.

On April 27, 1526 Babar made Delhi the seat of his newly conquered kingdom and the holy places of India saw comparative peace.

In 1556 Akbar the Great became the Mughal Emperor and a new age dawned on India. The foreigner became a national monarch, establishing those catholic traditions

which brought the *Bhakti* Renaissance into spring-time bloom.

With unparalleled statesmanship Akbar removed the disabilities under which the Hindus had been suffering. He visited Vrindavan and Man Singh, his favourite general, became the disciple of Jiva Goswami, the nephew of the Goswamis, Rupa and Sanatana. It was under his inspiration that the temple of Govindji was built — a temple which still stands intact as a symbol of the power which was Chaitanya and a living testimony to Akbar's greatness.

VI

Mankind has never seen such love as was Chaitanya's. The individual love of Sappho, Mira, Helois and Laila, are but faint echoes of his. None of them had such a love-lorn heart. To none was the lover — in his case Sri Krishna — so ever-present. His emotion had the quality of giving power, light and feeling to whatever it touched Dances and songs, prayers and *kirtan* dedicated to Sri Krishna, swept the country with an emotional flood which was as lyrical as it was ennobling.

Chaitanya never taught and but rarely entered into philosophic discussion; nor did he make efforts to gain disciples. When he died in 1533, it was his personality and experiences rather than his teachings which became the inspiration of the *bhakti* movements. They released new creative forces in Vrindavan; in the rest of India their influence opened the flood-gates of a sweeping religious urge, by direct influence, or indirect impact.

Like a mighty flood, *bhakti*, as reintegrated by Chaitanya, surged round the love of Radha and Krishna. It entered deep into the popular consciousness, intensifying the emotional awareness of fresh joys. It won libera-

lising triumphs of the heart over the bondage and suffering which political slavery and social rigidity had imposed upon the country. It imparted freshness to life, creative power to literature and richness to human relations, till poets in many parts of India echoed to the sentiment:

"To Vraja alone shall I hie;
  But never to Heaven:
For there I cannot meet
  Nanda's son, my Darling"

Even now, as we know, in many parts of the country men and women congregate, join with song, music and dance, in the *kirtans* to experience the ecstatic glow of a joy which knows neither sin nor suffering

VII

Thus *bhakti* grew into the most creative force in the country, bringing joy to every home and revitalising the Aryan culture. The new *bhakti* impulse spread from Vrindavan into Gujarat in the sixteenth century, and, perhaps, the two greatest *bhakti* poets of Gujarat, Mirabai and Narasimh Mehta, were influenced by the sadhus and *bhaktas* of this sect.

Mirabai, the greatest poetess of Western India, was a grand-daughter of Rau Dudaji, chief of Medta, a small principality in Rajputana. She was born about the year 1500, and her grandfather, a devout Vaishnava, influenced her mind from her earliest years. She was married to Bhojaraj, the son of Rana Sanga of Chitod, but he died c. 1517. In 1532, Sanga's younger son, Vikram, came to the throne of Chitod, which was then suffering from the after-effects of Sanga's unsuccessful war with Babar, the founder of the Mughal empire.

The widowed princess forgot the world in the worship of Krishna. Surrounded by sadhus and *bhaktas*, she prayed incessantly, singing devotional songs composed by herself. Her association with sadhus offended the Rana's sense of propriety, and he tried to put a stop to it by persecution. But Mira's attitude was unyielding

"Girdhar Gopal is mine, and none else I have left mother, father, and brother, in company of saints, I have lost all sense of shame I run to welcome saints; I weep, looking at the world I have reared an immortal creeper of *bhakti*, watering it with tears of love The thing has gone forth; every one knows it Mira, the slave of Girdhar, says what was to happen has happened"

And in one of her beautiful *padas* she addresses the Rana thus:

'Ranaji! What can I do? My love for Krishna is eternal. Rana of Mevad! What can I do? I am so tempted. My heart is at peace only when I worship my Rama; otherwise, I cannot even sleep The double rosary on my neck is to me a lovely ornament How can I forget my Lord, my bridegroom in all my past lives?"

The Rana even made an attempt to kill her. Rajput standards had condemned her as a disgrace to the family In her waking hours, she was a love-lorn cowherdess, beloved of her Lover, living in the imaginary world of Vrindavan.

"No one knows the pain I feel. No, none The wounded and the suffering alone know the plight of the wounded. Like a fish, I am dying for water. I lie on a bed made of thorns. Mira's pain will cease only when the physician, Samala, Dark One, comes."

Krishna is a living lover to her. She visits Vrindavan and yearns to see him. She hears the flute as its notes rise to the sky. He stops her on the way, taking the toll of

curds as from other *gopis*. She plays with him, dances the *rasa* with him. She pines away; she is reminiscent. "I am mad with love and no one knows it". She is fascinated with Krishna's face.

"I love your face. Enchanting one, I love your face. I saw your face and the world has become repulsive. My mind has been different since then."

Her longing is acute.

"Kanhu does not know of my love — my virgin love for Him. We went to fetch water from Jumna, he sprayed us with water there. And the spray was all about us."

The Beloved held a *rasa* in Vrindavan; he pulled off the raiment of sixteen hundred *gopis*. And the raiment was torn to shreds.

"Kanhu! I am mad after you, you have shot your arrows at me; and the arrows have pierced me through and through."

Bai Mira says: "Lord Girdhar, Kanhu has burnt her to death; He has thrown her ashes from a high hill. And the ashes are flying about on all sides."

Again she sings:

"My Girdhar, my Lover, my beloved handsome Dark One! Do not forsake us. You have gone to dwell in Mathura, but do not be cruel. . . . Your flute is still heard; its echoes are about us. Without you the pathways of Vraja are hateful."

So many stories are told about her that it is difficult to ascertain the facts. But one of her *bhajans* sums up her adventures.

"Govinda is my soul. The world repels me; I love only my Ramaji — I know no other. Saints devoted to Hari live in the palace of Mira. Hari lives away from the deceitful: but He lives beside my saints."

Ranaji sends a letter. "Go, and give it into the hands of Mira. 'Leave off the company of sadhus; come and live with me'."

Mirabai sends a reply. "Go, and give it into the hands of Ranaji. 'Let go your throne and kingdom; come and live with my sadhus'."

Rana sends a cup of poison. "Go, and give it into the hands of Mira." Mira drank it as if it were nectar; the Lord of the Universe protected her.

"Camelman! Get the camel ready. I have to go a hundred *koshas*. It is sinful even to take water in the kingdom of the Rana." Mira left Mevad and went to the west. She gave up all, for her mind was not with the world.

Mira is the beloved of Hari; she lives in the service of His saints. She likes the company of the holy; her heart is away from that deceitful person

Thus Mira came to live at Dwaraka in Kathiawad. After her departure, Chitod fell on evil days. Its throne changed hands at short intervals. Ultimately, the ruling prince traced its misfortunes to Mira's departure from Chitod, and begged her to come back Mirabai declined to return; but the unfortunate prince wanted her back at any cost. The brahmanas entered upon a fast in order to induce her to come. Moved by this, Mira went into the temple to ask leave of her Lord; she did it with tears in her eyes, singing her songs; and as she sang, she was merged in the idol of her Lord (c. 1547).

Mira is claimed by Gujarat, Rajputana and the whole of the Mathura region and recently the Hindi speaking world as a Hindi poet. But, during the century in which she lived there was only one language in these parts, Old Gujarati or Old Western Rajasthani, and it is no wonder that her *padas* are now found in all the dif-

ferent present-day varieties of that language She has not left any long poem, a large number of the *padas* which bear her name are not authentic, but some definitely bear the impress of her pure, noble and loving personality Her language is simple and appealing

She has only one thing to say, and, in consequence, her range is limited Her poems have elegance and delicacy rather than variety Her heart is capable of deep feeling, but its expression is limited by her comparative ignorance Mira is not egocentric, only intense not voluptuous, nor profound

But passion, grace delicacy melody — Mira has all these gifts Her longing is exquisite, it seizes all hearts, penetrates all souls Her poetic skill possesses the supreme art of being artless Sometimes she brings natural beauty to aid sense and sound in producing harmony An untranslatable harmony characterizes the following

"The peacock's notes are shrill Radha! the peacock's notes are shrill Peacocks call *papaiyas* call *koels* sing, the sound fills the air Lightning glistens dark clouds thunder Drizzling rain pours gently and as I come to meet you the fringe of my sari is wet Bai Mira says, this is the charm of my Lord Girdhar My Lord has stolen my heart"

Mira's *padas*, some of which are *garabis* have been very popular throughout Rajputana and Gujarat, and have considerably influenced the literature of succeeding periods

XVII

TULSIDAS

THERE can be no comparison between the polished phraseology of classical Sanskrit and the rough colloquial idiom of Tulsidas's vernacular; while the antiquity of Valmiki's poem further invests it with an adventitious interest for the student of Indian history But, on the other hand, the Hindi poem is the best and most trustworthy guide to the popular living faith of the Hindu race at the present day — a matter of not less practical interest than the creed of their remote ancestors — and its language, which in the course of three centuries has contracted a tinge of archaism, is a study of much importance to the philologist, as helping to bridge the chasm between the modern tongue and the mediaeval. It is also less wordy and diffuse than the Sanskrit original and, probably in consequence of its modern date, is less disfigured by wearisome interpolations and repetitions; while, if it never soars so high as Valmiki in some of his best passages, it maintains a more equable level of poetic diction, and seldom sinks with him into such dreary depths of unmitigated prose. It must also be noted that it is in no sense a translation of the earlier work: the general plan and the management of the incidents are necessarily much the same, but there is a difference in the touch in every detail; and the two poems vary as widely as any two dramas on the same mythological subject by two different Greek

tragedians. Even the coincidence of name is an accident; for Tulsidas himself called his poem the *Ram-charit-manas*, and the shorter title, corresponding in character to the "Iliad" or "Æneid," has only been substituted by his admirers as a handier designation for a popular favourite.

* * *

The earliest notice of our author, as indeed, of all the other celebrated Vaishnava writers who flourished about the same period, viz., the 16th and 17th century A.D., is to be found in the *Bhakta-Mala*, or "Legends of the Saints," one of the most difficult works in the Hindi language. Its composition is invariably ascribed to Nabha Ji, himself one of the leaders of the reform which had its centre at Vrindavan; but the poem, as we now have it, was avowedly edited, if not entirely written, by one of his disciples named Narayan Das who lived during the reign of Shahjahan. A single stanza is all that is ordinarily devoted to each personage, who is panegyrized with reference to his most salient characteristics in a style that might be described as of unparalleled obscurity, were it not that each such separate portion of the text is followed by a *tika*, or gloss, written by one Priya Das in the *Samvat* year 1769 (A.D. 1713) in which confusion is still worse confounded by a series of the most disjointed and inexplicit allusions to different legendary events in the saint's life.

* * *

Professor Wilson, in his most valuable and interesting "Essay on the Religious Sects of the Hindus," gives the following notice of Tulsidas, and adds that he had deriv ed it from the *Bhakta-Mala*: "Having been incited to the peculiar adoration of Rama by the remonstrances of his wife, to whom he was passionately attached, he adopted

a vagrant life, visited Benares, and afterwards went to Chitrakut, where he had a personal interview with Hanuman, from whom he received his poetical inspiration and the power of working miracles. His fame reached Delhi, where Shahjahan was emperor. The monarch sent for him to produce the person of Rama, which Tulsidas refusing to do, the king threw him into confinement. The people of the vicinity, however, speedily petitioned for his liberation, as they were alarmed for their own security: myriads of monkeys having collected about the prison and begun to demolish it and the adjacent buildings. Shahjahan set the poet at liberty and desired him to solicit some favour as a reparation for the indignity he had suffered. Tulsidas accordingly requested him to quit ancient Delhi, which was the abode of Rama; and in compliance with this request the emperor left it and founded the new city, thence named Shahjahanabad. After this Tulsidas went to Vrindavan, where he had an interview with Nabha Ji; he settled there and strenuously advocated the worship of Sita-Rama, in preference to that of Radha-Krishna ''

* * *

In addition to his great work Tulsidas composed at least six other poems, all of them having the one object of popularizing the cult of his tutelary divinity. They are the *Ramgitavali*, the *Dohavali*, the *Kabit sambandh*, the *Binay Patrika*, the *Satsai* and the *Ram Agya* All of these have been published, either at Lucknow or Benares, within the last few years, and all now for the first time, excepting the *Binay Patrika*, which was printed in good type by Sri Lallu Ji for the use of the college of Fort William as far back as the year 1826; but copies of this first edition are now very scarce. The list is not unfrequently extended by the addition of the following minor works,

as to the genuineness of which there is considerable doubt, viz., the *Rama-Salaka*, the *Hanuman Bahuka*, the *Janaki Mangal*, the *Parvati Mangal*, the *Karka Chhand*, the *Rora Chhand* and the *Jhulna Chhand*. An autograph manuscript of the *Ram Agya* was preserved in the temple of Sita-Ram at Benares, which Tulsidas had himself founded, till the Mutiny, but was then lost.

His theological and metaphysical views are pantheistic in character being based for the most part on the teaching of the later Vedantists as formulated in the *Vedanta-Sutra* and more elaborately expounded in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is the most popular of all Sanskrit didactic poems. The whole visible world, as they maintain, is an unreal phantasm, induced by ignorance or illusion, and it is only by a concession to conventional speech that it can be said to exist at all. The sole representative of true existence is the supreme spirit, Brahman, conceived as absolute and unchangeable unity; invisible, eternal and all-pervading, but having no relation to the world — since that would involve a notion of dualism — and for the same reason void of cognition, will, activity and all other qualities; a potentiality, in the ordinary use of language, rather than an actual entity. All phenomena, whether material or spiritual, including even the gods of Vedic mythology, are simply fictions of the mind. But the worship of the inferior divinities and compliance with the external ritual of religion, are considered to purify and prepare the intellect for the reception of higher truths. They are therefore salutary and even necessary practices during the early days of the soul's progress towards perfection. If a man is overtaken by death before he has advanced beyond this preliminary stage, he is born again either into this or into a higher world in some different form, the dignity of which is determined by the aggregate

merit or demerit of all actions in all his previous births. The highest reward for devotion to any special god is the exaltation of the soul to his particular sphere in heaven. But this blessedness is not of permanent duration: on the expiry of a proportionate period the burden of mundane existence has again to be undergone. It is only on the attainment of perfect knowledge that final emancipation is complete and the individual soul is absorbed for ever into Impersonal:

> "A spiritual star — wrought in a rose
> Of light in Paradise, whose only self
> Is consciousness of glory wide diffused"

Except to a theosophist, the promise of such an ultimate destiny is not a very attractive one, nor is it conducive to popular morality. For good deeds and evil deeds and the god that recompenses them, all alike belong to the unreal, to the fictitious duality, the world of semblances; while the so-called Supreme Being is no proper object of worship, being a mere cold abstraction, unconscious of His own existence or of ours, and devoid of all attributes and qualities. To correct this practical defect and supply some intelligible motive for withstanding temptation and leading a pure and holy life, the supplementary doctrine of *Bhakti*, or Faith, was developed. Some one of the recognized incarnations of the Hindu pantheon was no longer regarded as a partial emanation of the divinity, but as exalted into the complete embodiment of it. A loving devotion to his personality was then enjoined as a simple and certain method of attaining to endless felicity; not the transitory sensual delights of Indra's paradise, nor the mere unconsciousness of utter extinction, but the conscious enjoyment of individual immortality in the immediate presence of the Beatific Vision.

The late introduction of this crowning dogma of Faith in an incarnate Redeemer and its marked similarity to Christian ideas have induced several scholars to surmise that the brahmanas borrowed it from the early Christian communities in Southern India. The notion is favoured — if not, indeed, originated — by the fact that in the *Bhagavad-Gita* it is Krishna who figures as the embodiment of the Supreme Being, and both in the name and in the legends of Krishna there is a superficial resemblance to the name of Christ and to some of the incidents recorded of Him in the Gospels. As I have shown more fully elsewhere, there is no historical basis for the supposed connection, while the similarity of name is demonstrably accidental. The doctrine appears to have grown up as a natural sequel to the purely indigenous school of thought in which we find it established, and an exact parallel can be traced in the history of Buddhism, where the nihilism of Nirvana was practically abrogated by the gradual deification of its teacher. In selecting Rama as his ideal of the divine in preference to Krishna, Tulsidas has certainly improved upon the teaching of the *Bhagavata*.

The tendency of modern scientific thought is setting strongly in favour of the Vedantist theory; as declaring the existence from all eternity of a personal God to be simply unknowable, and referring all phenomena to a strange mysterious energy, or will, that pervades all nature, that produces all the work done on the face of the earth, and is probably at the root of life itself; invisible and insensible, and exhibited only in its effects. Such a theory — as we see from our author's own case — is by no means incompatible with a belief in a divine incarnation: the difficulty is to establish by historical proof that such and such a character — Rama or Krishna, or whoever it may be — was really born out of the ordinary

course of nature, really performed the marvellous acts ascribed to him for the deliverance of the saints, the overthrow of the wicked and the establishment of righteousness, and having accomplished them was again taken up into the heaven from which he came The whole of Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is a passionate protest against the virtual atheism of philosophical Hindu theology.

The problem that confronted him is the very same that now most exercises the thought of the nineteenth century. If the Supreme Being is a personal God, he must be limited by the conditions of personality, and can neither be omniscient nor omnipotent If, on the other hand, the Deity is an omnipresent, all-pervading impersonality, how can any special relation be developed between such an abstraction and the individual soul? The difficulty is one that has its root in the nature of things; and no solution of the mystery can be found but in the recognition of faith and reason as two distinct human faculties, with the infinite and the finite as their separate provinces. In the words of Saint Ambrose *non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum* (God would not be adorable if he were not incomprehensible)· and a religion that does not transcend man's understanding is not, strictly speaking, a religion at all. A just discrimination of good and evil and a sound code of morality are not beyond the compass of natural intelligence; but the rites and mysteries of religion can only be learnt by a direct revelation from God and through the action of His grace. Their acceptance by faith, even when they seem to conflict with reason, is a part of our earthly probation and a meritorious confession of our dependence on the Supreme.

The final purpose of the Incarnation, like the idea of any revelation whatever from God to man, is above

comprehension. The fact of the divine message having been sent may be reasonably established by historical evidence, but the tenor of the message transcends argumentative discussion, and demands nothing short of implicit and absolutely unquestioning submission. For the dogmas of revealed religion must, *ex-hypothesi,* be incomprehensible mysteries. If they were ascertainable by the ordinary processes of reason it would not be consistent with the economy of the universe to communicate them by the special vehicle of revelation. A professedly revealed religion, which is demonstrable and intelligible throughout, stands self-convicted as a human invention.

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The words "Blind are the eyes which deem the Unmanifested manifest" emphatically condemn the worship of any incarnation, on the ground that it involves an inadequate conception of the Deity. Tulsidas, on the other hand, insists that they derogate from the divine perfection, who divest it of personality and reduce it to an abstraction. Against such theologians he hotly protests as when he cried (VII *Chhand* 5) — "Let them preach in their wisdom who contemplate Thee as the Supreme Spirit, the Uncreate, inseparable from the universe, recognizable only by inference and beyond the understanding; but we, O Lord! will ever hymn the glories of Thy incarnation." Nor does he want supporters even in this nineteenth century, who give the same answer to the old question "Can the attribute of personality be ascribed to the Absolute?" Thus Lotze, in his *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion,* argues as follows: "If all the predicates of unconditionateness are to be valid for the highest being then one condition of this validity lies precisely in the addition of a last formal predicate, viz., that of personal existence. All hindrances of perfect personality we can

imagine as not existent in the Infinite Spirit. On this account we conclude with the assertion — which is exactly the opposite of the customary one — that Perfect Personality is reconcilable only with the conception of an Infinite Being; for finite beings, only an approximation to this is attainable.''

The introductory portion of the first Book of the *Ramayana* is curious as containing the author's vindication of his literary style as against his critics, the pedants. They attacked him for lowering the dignity of his subject by clothing it in the vulgar vernacular. However just his defence may be, it has not succeeded in converting the opposite faction: and the professional Sanskrit pandits who are its modern representatives, still affect to despise his work as an unworthy concession to the illiterate masses. With this small and solitary exception the book is in every one's hands, from the court to the cottage, and is read, or heard, and appreciated alike by every class of the Hindu community, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old.

* * *

The second Book is more generally read than any other part of the poem, and is the most admired by Hindu critics. The description of King Dasharatha's death and the different leave-takings are quoted as models of the pathetic, and in a public recital there is scarcely one in the audience who will not be moved to tears. The sentiments that the poet depicts, and the figures that he employs to illustrate them, appeal with irresistible force to the Hindu imagination; and, if for no other reason than this, they would be interesting to the English student for the insight they afford into the traditional sympathies and antipathies of the people.

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The Hindi *Ramayana* has many passages that are instinct with a genuine poetic feeling, which appeals to universal humanity, and which it is hoped will be dimly recognised even through the ineffectual medium of a prose translation. The characters also of the principal actors in the drama are clearly and consistently drawn; and all may admire, though they refuse to worship, the piety and unselfishness of Bharata; the enthusiasm and high courage of Lakshmana; the affectionate devotion of Sita, that paragon of all wife-like virtues; and the purity, meekness, generosity and self-sacrifice of Rama, the model son, husband and brother, "the guileless king, high, self-contained and passionless — the Arthur of Indian chivalry.

In the later Books the narrative is generally more rapid than that in the earlier part of the poem, and several incidents are so casually mentioned that, without the explanatory references to the Sanskrit *Ramayana*, a literal rendering would convey no meaning to the ordinary reader. It is to some extent a literary defect that the role of poet is so often dropped for that of theologian; and the frequent hymns to Rama, who is apostrophized under every conceivable name that can help to realise to the mind the mystery of incarnate divinity, soon become wearisome. But the object that Tulsidas had in view is his sufficient excuse. By the course that he has adopted, fitting his special doctrines of faith, individual immortality and the like into the familiar frame-work of ancient legend, instead of inculcating them by a more strictly didactic method, he has succeeded in popularizing his views to a far greater extent than any of the rival Hindu reformers, who flourished about the same period. It was their object also to simplify the complications and correct the abuses of existing practice, but the only result of their preaching was to establish yet another

element of dissension and augment the disorder which they hoped to remove. Tulsidas alone, though the most famous of them all, has no disciples that are called after his name. There are Vallabhacharis and Radha Vallabhis and Maluk Dasis and Pran Nathis, and so on, in interminable succession, but there are no Tulsidasis. Virtually, however, the whole of Vaishnava Hinduism has fallen under his sway; for the principles that he expounded have permeated every sect and explicitly or implicitly now form the nucleus of the popular faith as it prevails throughout the whole of the Bengal Presidency from Hardwar to Calcutta.

XVIII

SHAIKH NIZAMUDDIN AULIYA*

SHAIKH NIZAMUDDIN'S paternal grandfather, Khawja Syed Ali, had emigrated from Bokhara and settled in Badaun, where the Shaikh was born in A D. 1238. While he was yet a child, his father, Syed Ahmad, fell ill and his mother, Bibi Zulaikha, dreamt that a voice was asking her to choose between her husband and her son. With the eternal instinct of the Indian mother, Bibi Zulaikha preferred to save her son, and as destiny would have it, Syed Ahmad died soon after. Bibi Zulaikha was a lady of fervent piety, and her character left a deep impression on the son, whom she adored and managed to educate in conditions of appalling poverty. Mother and son had no means of livelihood except what their neighbours brought to them unasked, and their maid-servant ran away from the starving household. Nevertheless, the Shaikh, who was remarkable for his diligence, learnt all that Badaun had to teach, and, at the age of sixteen, went with his mother and sister to complete his studies at Delhi. The great capital was at that time full of scholars and men of learning; education was practically free; and a student so intelligent as the Shaikh had access to the best teachers. His

* Popular usage nowadays divides Indian Mussalmans into Syeds, Moghuls, Pathans and a fourth, extensive and nondescript class, designated Shaikhs. In mediaeval India, a Shaikh meant an eminent mystic or saint. I have used the term in its mediaeval significance.

principal tutor, Maulana Kamaluddin Zahid, was distinguished by a remarkable independence of character. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban, having heard of Maulana Zahid's piety, invited him to the court and offered him the post of Head Imam. "Our prayer is all that is left to us," the Maulana replied, "does the Sultan wish to seize that also?" Balban was struck dumb, and, after offering a brief apology, allowed the Maulana to depart. From such a scholar Shaikh Nizamuddin obtained his final certificate at the age of twenty and, perhaps, also imbibed that indifference towards men of worldly grandeur that distinguished him throughout his life.

Though he had hitherto followed the normal course of studies, the Shaikh's mind was already inclined towards mysticism, and he had often told his comrades that he would not for long remain in the atmosphere of their literary discussions. At the age of twelve he had heard a *qawwal* (reciter of mystic verse) praise the piety of Shaikh Farid Ganj Shakar of Ajodhan; ever since then he had developed an extraordinary reverence for that saint and went to see him as soon as his studies were completed. "Every new-comer is nervous," Shaikh Farid remarked on seeing that the young man was unable to speak from fear. Shaikh Nizamuddin shaved his head and was enrolled among the disciples. He was, of course, absolutely penniless; a kindly lady washed his clothes when they became too dirty to be worn any longer, and Shaikh Farid presented him with a gold coin when he was about to leave for Delhi. But it was the last coin of Shaikh Farid's own household, and that very morning Shaikh Nizamuddin discovered that his master and his master's family would have to go without dinner because they lacked the means of purchasing it. The disciple laid the master's gift again at his feet. It was gratefully accepted. "I have

prayed to God to grant you a portion of earthly good," Shaikh Farid blessed the young disciple, and then seeing his anxiety added: "Have no fear about it, *for you the world shall not be a temptation.*" The master's discerning eyes had not failed to see the greatness of his successor.

There have been distinguished men in all religions whose lives have been a continuous struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil—who have fought and, to a considerable extent, succeeded in the great battle that is supposed to be constantly raging between the higher and the lower elements of human nature. Shaikh Nizamuddin was *not* one of them. He is not recorded to have recited a surprising number of prayers; he did not, like Shaikh Farid, hang himself by his feet in a well or bring himself to the verge of death by unending fasts. There was no element of asceticism in him, because for him the ascetic discipline was not necessary. He did not exorcize the devil by torture or self-mortification, which very often only substitutes morbidity for worldliness, but ruled him out by the quiet joy that inspired his heart. He never married and never possessed a house of his own. People observed that his eyes were red in the morning after his night-long meditation, like one slightly tipsy, and an indescribable happiness shone on his face. There was nothing in the external circumstances of his life to explain this inner bliss.

"I have given you the spiritual empire of Hindusthan", Shaikh Farid had ordered him: "go and take it". But Shaikh Nizamuddin on returning to Delhi, was for long undecided as to whether he should remain at the capital or select a provincial town for his residence. This is the only inner struggle that seems to have taken place in his mind; but ultimately he decided to face his duty

boldly by living and working in the great metropolis. There followed about thirty years of appalling poverty. He first stayed in the house of 'Imadul Mulk, Amir Khusrau's maternal grandfather, who was generally known as *Rawat-i Arz*, but after two years 'Imadul Mulk's sons returned to Delhi and summarily evicted the Shaikh from their house. He sought refuge in a thatched mosque near by, and that very night 'Imadul Mulk's house caught fire and was burnt to ashes. Thereafter, till his final settlement at Ghiaspur, he kept wandering from one quarter of the city to another. He had no means of his own and never condescended to ask anyone for help. "In the days of Ghiyasuddin Balban," the Shaikh used to say in later life, "melons were sold at the rate of one *jital* per maund, but very often the season passed away without my being able to taste a slice....On one occasion I had to go without food for a night and a day, and half the second night had passed before I got anything to eat; two seers of bread could be had for a *jital*, but from sheer poverty I was unable to purchase anything from the market. My mother, sister and other persons in my house suffered along with me. On one occasion we had starved for three days when a man knocked at my door with a bowl of *khichri*. I have never found anything so delicious as that plain *khichri* appeared to me then. 'We are the guests of God today,' my mother used to say when we had no food left in the house, and an inexplicable joy overpowered my heart at these words. Once I dreamt that Shaikh Najibuddin Mutawakkil, brother of Shaikh Farid, had come to our house, and I asked my mother to get something for him to eat. 'But there is no food in our house', she replied. Soon after I dreamt that the Holy Prophet was coming with his Companions. I kissed his feet and requested him to visit my house. 'What for?' 'I will place before you

and your Companions whatever dinner I can provide.' 'But has not your mother told you just now that there is no food in your house?' the Prophet replied. I felt thoroughly ashamed at my position "

The venerable mother bore everything bravely along with her son, whose peace of mind no earthly misfortune could disturb, but the continued starvation was, perhaps too much for her health. "Whose feet will you kiss next month, Nizam?" she asked him during her last illness when he had placed his head on her feet after seeing the new moon. "And to whose care will you assign me mother?" the son inquired. Before the morning had dawned she called him to her bed-side. "Almighty God!" —she took his hand in hers—"I assign my son to Thy care." And with these words on her lips the venerable lady passed away.

Meanwhile the Shaikh's fame had been spreading far and wide, and everyone who came in contact with him was captivated by the strange joy that radiated from him. In A.D. 1267, Shaikh Farid nominated him his successor and, just before his death, ordered his cloak, staff and prayer-carpet to be conveyed to Shaikh Nizamuddin, to the intense annoyance of his own children, who expected to succeed to the profitable post Sultan Jalaluddin offered to endow a village for the Shaikh's expense; the disciples who had collected round him protested that they had suffered as much as they could stand, but in spite of their protests the offer was firmly refused. The Sultan next asked for an interview; it was not granted: and when the Sultan resolved to pay a surprise visit, the Shaikh, who had come to know of his intention from Amir Khusrau, avoided the interview by undertaking a journey to Ajodhan. The Shaikh had made up his mind to keep aloof from politics, and nothing could turn him from that reso-

lution. But it was impossible for the teacher, who had opened his door wide to all who came, to keep politicians away. In the beginning of Alauddin's reign the nobles began to visit his monastery at Ghiaspur; the Shaikh was annoyed at their visits, but did not refuse to see them. Gradually their number increased.

Towards the end of Alauddin's reign the Shaikh's reputation reached its full height. Khizr Khan, the heir apparent, became a firm believer in the Shaikh, and every member of the Imperial family and every servant of the Palace joined the great discipleship. The Sultan himself was the only exception. "What sort of heart was Alauddin's?" the pious Barani remarks, "How indifferent and bold? From thousands of *farsangs* travellers and students came to pay their respects to the Shaikh: the young and old of the city, scholars and common people, the wise and the foolish, all tried by thousands of tricks to present themselves before him; but it never came to Alauddin's mind that he, too, should either visit the Shaikh or invite him to the court." The Emperor and the Shaikh were, in fact, too great in their own departments to have anything more than a distant respect for each other. Alauddin cared as little for saints as the Shaikh did for politicians. In his own erratic way he had made up his mind to bend his sinful knees before God alone.

Thanks to the *malfuzats* of Amir Khusrau and Amir Hasan and the *Siyarul Aulia* of Amir Khurd, Shaikh Nizamuddin, at the fullness of his reputation and influence, is better known to us than any other figure in mediaeval India. "He opened wide the doors of his discipleship and confessed all sinners—nobles and commons, rich and poor, *maliks* and beggars, students and illiterate folk, citizens and villagers, soldiers and civilians, free-men and slaves." Forenoon and afternoon and the hours after sunset were

set apart for those who came to consult him; but he was always accessible and seldom kept anyone waiting.

The work of a Shaikh was to educate the people in virtue and goodness, and to this task Shaikh Nizamuddin applied himself with singular devotion throughout his long and useful life. People of every class came to his monastery and he talked to each according to his knowledge and understanding; and everyone who visited the Shaikh felt himself captivated. Besides a thin volume of *malfuzat,* Shaikh Nizamuddin never cared to write anything, and the surviving works of his disciples can but dimly give us the impression of a personality which was as unique as it was fascinating. No Indo-Muslim mystic has left such a deep impression on his contemporaries. "No deed will bring a greater reward on the Day of Judgment," he used to say, "than bringing happiness to the hearts of Mussalmans and of men." And yet, in spite of the fact that he was mixing and talking with all who came, people felt that the Shaikh's heart was always "turned towards God as if He was looking at him".

The annals of hagiology are strewn with the records of meaningless miracles, but Shaikh Nizamuddin was not a miracle-monger of the ordinary sort. He never flew in the air or walked on water with dry and motionless feet. His greatness was the greatness of a loving heart; his miracles were the miracles of a deeply sympathetic soul. He could read a man's inner heart by a glance at his face and spoke the words that brought consolation to tortured hearts.

Khwaja Mubarak of Gopamau used to get a robe of honour from Sultan Alauddin whenever he presented himself at the court, but on one occasion the Sultan only bestowed a white sheet on him, and the Khwaja, greatly pained at this change in the Sultan's attitude, came to

see Shaikh Nizamuddin. The latter looked at him tenderly and said: "A king's gift is a thing of value, be it a gold coin or a shell." "My heart rejoiced at the words," the Khwaja declared later, "and my despondency disappeared."

A young sceptic once presented himself with his friends before the Shaikh, and along with the sweetmeats brought by his friends, he placed a little sand wrapped in paper before the Shaikh. When the servants came to remove the presents, the Shaikh ordered them to leave the packet of sand where it was. "This antimony," he said, "is specially meant for my eyes." The young man trembled and confessed, but the Shaikh presented him with a dress and tried to console him. "If you are in need of food or money," he asked, "tell me so and I will do what I can."

In the period of his poverty the Shaikh once sat down to eat a few crumbs of bread after he had gone without food for two days. But a beggar, who passed that way, imagined that the Shaikh had finished his dinner and very unceremoniously took away the crumbs from his dinner-cloth. "Our sufferings must have been accepted by the Lord that he tries us further."

A visitor, who saw the Shaikh and his disciples starving, offered to teach him alchemy. But the Shaikh would have none of it. "Mixing colours," he said, "is the work of Christians, and accumulating gold is the task of Jews. We, Mussalmans, do not wish for the goods of this world or the next. We live for the Lord alone."

Call such things miracles, if you please, provided by a miracle is not meant something morally irrational or meaningless. The Shaikh's life was, in fact, the embodiment of what psychological research shall one day prove to be the deepest principle of our human nature: that

salvation, or happiness in its highest form, lies not in a war with the attractions of worldly life or in indifference towards them, but in the healthy development of the "cosmic emotion", in a sympathetic identification of the individual with his environment, so that the distinction of the *I* and *not I* disappears in a mystic absorption of the human soul in the Absolute God is not so much a Creator to be acknowledged as an Existence to be felt — felt not as an abstraction but as a reality embodied in the living and inanimate creatures around us And thus salvation is not something to be obtained in the world beyond; it is to be attained by progressive stages, here and now, or it will be never reached at all.

The blessing of Shaikh Farid accompanied his disciple throughout his life. "*For him the world was never a temptation.*" When, in later life, presents began to come to Shaikh Nizamuddin from all sides, he distributed them to the needy with a liberal hand, and every Friday the kitchen and pantry were swept clear before the saint went for his prayer. Sumptuous dishes were placed before his visitors, but the saint, who fasted almost every day, dined only on a plain bread with some vegetable. And when a follower remonstrated against his continued abstinence, he replied that "while so many poor and miserable men were starving in the mosques and before the shops in the market, it was impossible for a morsel to pass down his throat."

His sleep was as meagre as his diet; he slept a little at midday and rested a little before midnight. But after midnight, when every one had gone to bed, the Shaikh locked up the door of his bedroom and kept meditating, reading, praying and reciting verses till the morning. "In silence I and the lamp keep each other company till the break of day: sometimes I extinguish it with the coldness

of my sighs, at other times I make it burn brighter with the fire of my soul." He had a delightful time of it. "Every night when the morning is approaching," the Shaikh said once, "a verse comes to my mind which brings me great inspiration and delight. This morning I recollected these lines:—

'The garment by Thy separation torn
  Living, once more, once more, re-knit I must
And if I die, accept my frank excuse,
  Alas, the hopes that crumble into dust!'

But when I was reciting the verses a second time, a woman appeared before me and with great humility requested me not to continue the recitation." "Was it a dream?" asked one Qazi Sharfuddin. "No, I was wide awake," answered the Shaikh, "I saw her as clearly as see you." "Then this woman was the symbol of the world which did not wish you to leave her", the Qazi remarked. "You are right", said the Shaikh.

But in spite of all his efforts, Shaikh Nizamuddin could not quite keep out of the whirlpool of politics. Sultan Alauddin's eldest son, Khizr Khan, was a disciple of the Shaikh, and it was naturally imagined that the Shaikh would favour his succession But in the intrigues that followed Alauddin's death, Shaikh Nizamuddin kept quiet. Sultan Kutbuddin Mubarak Shah, who ascended the throne of his father after an interregnum of forty days, at first followed a liberal policy and showed no hostility towards the Shaikh; but, while returning from his Deccan campaign, Mubarak discovered a dastardly conspiracy organised by Malik Asaduddin, a cousin of Sultan Alauddin, and his hand fell heavily on the conspirators. Even the late Sultan's sons, Khizr Khan, Shadi Khan and Shahabuddin, who had been blinded and imprisoned by Malik

Kafur at Gwalior, were put to death, and Mubarak felt that he should nurse a grievance against the Shaikh. "He began to speak ill of the Shaikh," Barni tells us, "and displayed open hostility. The *maliks* and *amirs* of the court were ordered not to go to the Shaikh's monastery at Ghiaspur, and the intoxicated Sultan would often declare with his fearless tongue that he was prepared to give a thousand *tankas* of gold to anyone who brought him Shaikh Nizamuddin's head."

Sultan and Shaikh once came face to face at the *siyyum* of Shaikh Ziauddin Rumi, but Mubarak paid no regard to Shaikh's dignity and even refrained from acknowledging his *salam*. Shaikh Ruknuddin was called from Multan in order to turn away the public eye from Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya; but as he was an old friend of Shaikh Nizamuddin, Mubarak Shah tried to set up one Shaikhzada Jam, an old enemy of Shaikh Nizamuddin, as a sort of antipope.

When people are inclined to quarrel, it is easy to find occasions for doing so. The Sultan built a mosque, called the Masjid-i Miri, and invited the leading men of the capital to the first Friday prayer. The Shaikh refused to go. "The mosque nearest my house", he told the Sultan's messenger, "has greater claims on me." Worse than that, the Shaikh ventured to disregard the custom, which required all men of note to attend the Sultan's court on the first day of every month, and sent his servant, Iqbal, as his deputy. The Sultan naturally resented the insult and finally threatened to call the Shaikh in person by a legal summons as soon as the new moon was seen. But the occasion for it never arrived. On the night of the new moon, Mubarak Shah was assassinated by the Barwars, and Shaikh Nizamuddin was set free from a difficult situation. The murder of the Sultan, the pious Amir Khurd would

have us believe, was due to the prayers of the Shaikh, not to the crimes of the Barwars. The decision of such problems is, fortunately, beyond the province of the historian.

The Barwar regime, which followed Mubarak's death, was turbulent and short-lived, but Ghiasuddin Tughlak, who mounted the throne after suppressing the rebels, proved to be an ideal ruler according to the needs of the time. Shaikh Nizamuddin's relations with Sultan Ghiasuddin, however, are said to have been none too cordial: so at least later writers would have us believe. Ferishta, who sums up all that he found floating down the stream of time, gives two reasons for this. Khusrau Khan, in his attempt to find supporters in every direction, distributed large sums of money to distinguished mystics. Three of them refused; others accepted the money but kept it safely in order to give it to the legitimate king whenever he should appear. But Shaikh Nizamuddin, who had been offered 500,000 *tankas*—while other mystics only got 300,000 *tankas* each—immediately took the money and distributed it to the poor. Ghiasuddin recovered most of the money Khusrau Khan had thrown away; all other mystics paid up, but nothing could be recovered from Shaikh Nizamuddin, for the simple reason that nothing was left. This incident is said to have alienated Sultan Ghiasuddin's mind. He also objected to the Shaikh's listening to mystic verses recited by *qawwals*, though after a learned discussion among scholars, the Sultan withdrew his objection.

When returning from the Bengal expedition, Ghiasuddin sent a message to the Shaikh asking him to leave Delhi before the Sultan's return. "Delhi is still far off (*Hanauz Dehli dur ast*)", the Shaikh replied, and the Sultan never reached Delhi. The fall of a mysterious

pavilion built for his reception by his son, Muhammad bin Taghlaq, cut short one of the most promising reigns of mediaeval India.

The incident is quoted by shallow critics as evidence of the Shaikh's spiritual power. The truth is more tragic. Shaikh Nizamuddin had already departed for "the world beyond" several days before the Sultan's funeral procession entered Delhi. The story, whatever its moral worth, appears a later day fabrication. Neither Barni nor Amir Khurd says anything concerning the unpleasantness between the two men, who were so eminently virtuous in their different spheres of life.

"I want no monument over my grave; lay me to rest in the broad and open plain," Shaikh Nizamuddin had said before his death, but Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, none the less, built a dome over it. Six hundred years have elapsed since; empires have risen and fallen; Delhi has been repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt; but throughout all these changes, the mausoleum of Shaikh Nizamuddin has remained the one living spot in the city of desolate and crumbling ruins. It is frequented by Hindus and Mussalmans alike.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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INDEX